

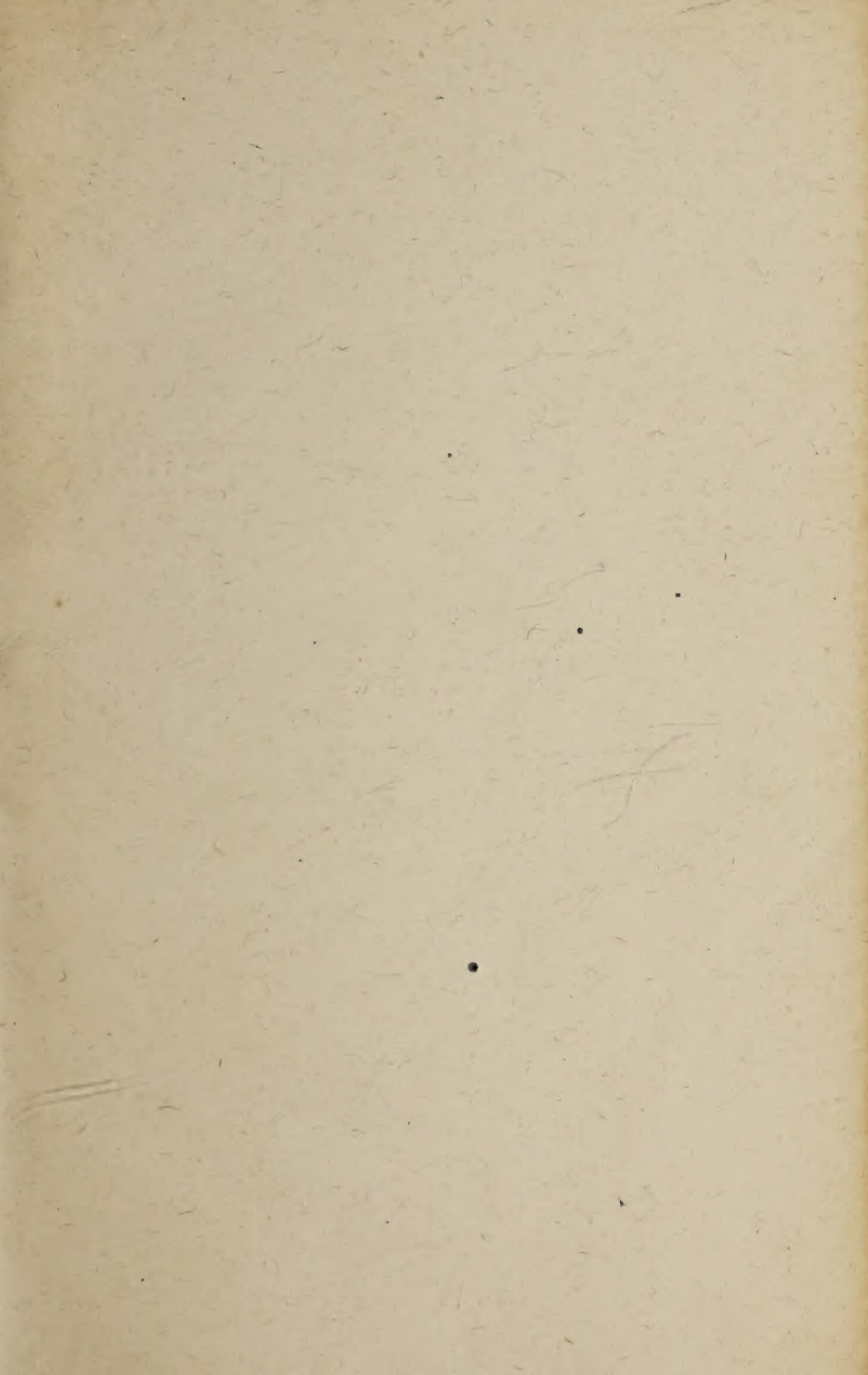
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OF A ROLLING STONE

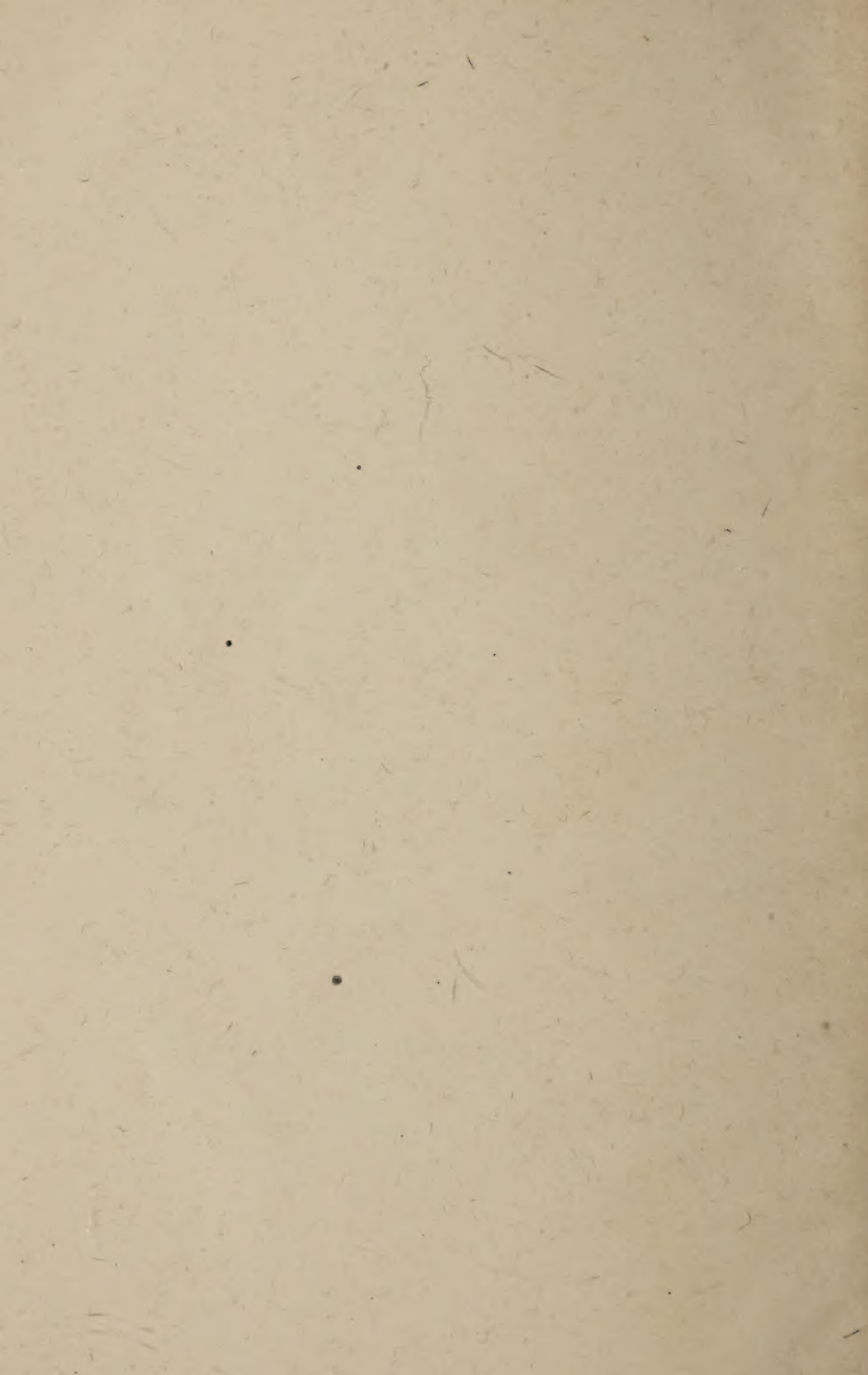
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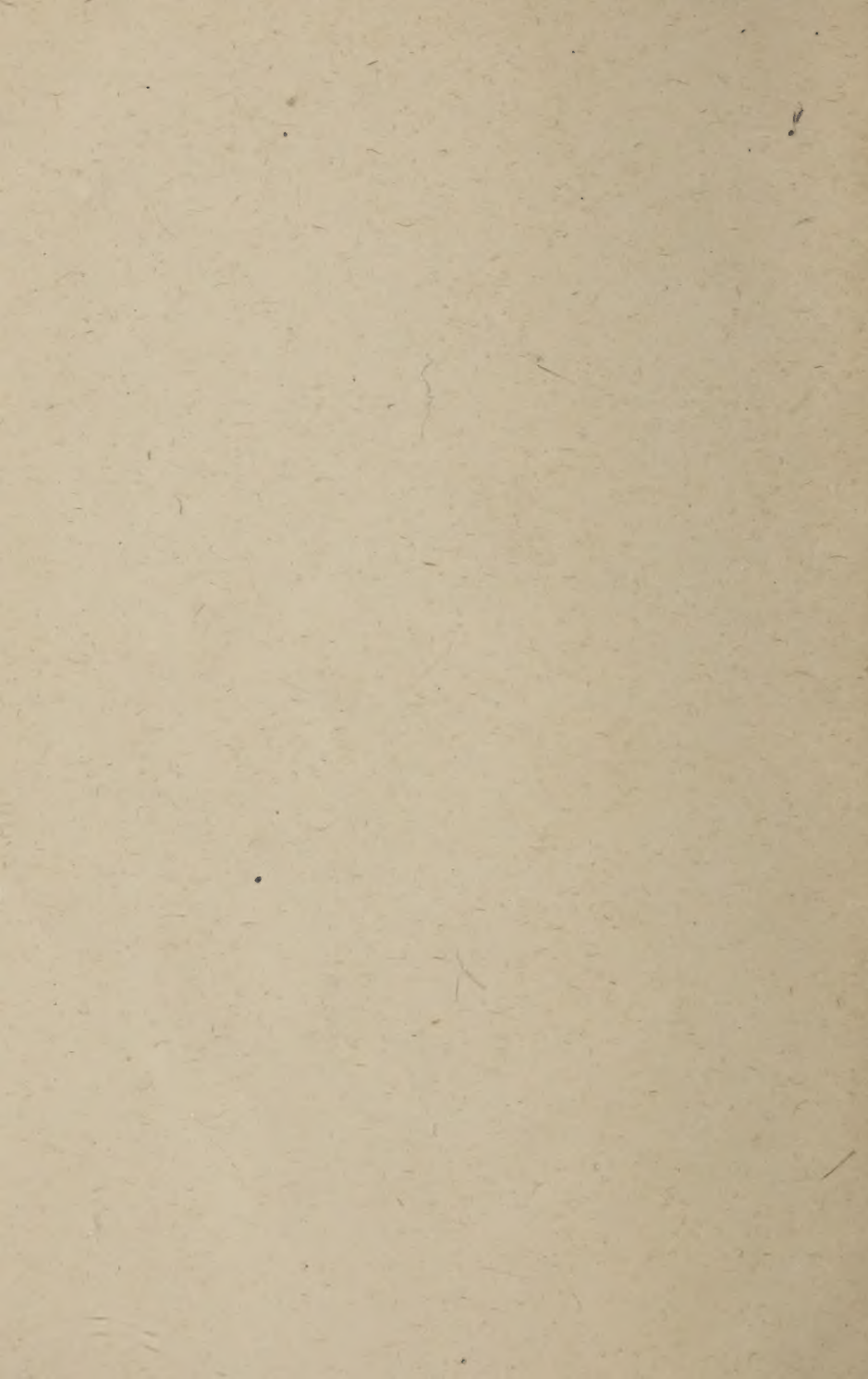
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ARTS OF THE
ROLLING STONE



RHYMES OF A
ROLLING STONE



“And here they must make the long portage,
and the boys sweat in the sun.”

Athabaska Dick.

RHYMES
OF A
ROLLING STONE

BY
ROBERT W. SERVICE

TORONTO
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1926

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by ROBERT W. SERVICE

I have no doubt at all the Devil grins
As seas of ink I spatter ;
Ye gods, forgive my "literary" sins—
The other kind don't matter.

PRELUDE

PRELUDE

*I sing no idle songs of dalliance days,
No dreams Elysian inspire my rhyming;
I have no Celia to enchant my lays,
No pipes of Pan have set my heart to
chiming.*

*I am no wordsmith dripping gems divine
Into the golden chalice of a sonnet;
If love songs witch you, close this book of
mine,
Waste no time on it.*

*Yet bring I to my work an eager joy,
A lusty love of life and all things human;
Still in me leaps the wonder of the boy,
A pride in man, a deathless faith in
woman.*

*Still red blood calls, still rings the valiant
fray;*

*Adventure beacons through the summer
gloaming;*

*Oh, long and long and long will be the day
Ere I come homing!*

PRELUDE

*This earth is ours to love; lute, brush and
pen,*

*They are but tongues to tell of life sin-
cerely;*

*The thaumaturgic Day, the might of men,
O God of Scribes, grant us to grave them
clearly!*

*Grant heart that homes in heart, then all
is well.*

*Honey is honey-sweet, howe'er the hiving.
Each to his work, his wage at evening bell
The strength of striving.*

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A ROLLING STONE

A ROLLING STONE

*There's sunshine in the heart of me,
My blood sings in the breeze;
The mountains are a part of me,
I'm fellow to the trees.
My golden youth I'm squandering,
Sun-libertine am I;
A-wandering, a-wandering,
Until the day I die.*

I was once, I declare, a Stone Age man,
And I roomed in the cool of a cave:
I have known, I will swear, in a new life-
span,
The fret and the sweat of a slave;
For far over all that folks hold worth,
There lives and there leaps in me
A love of the lowly things of earth,
And a passion to be free.

A ROLLING STONE

To pitch my tent with no prosy plan,
To range and to change at will;
To mock at the mastership of man,
To seek Adventure's thrill.
Carefree to be, as a bird that sings,
To go my own sweet way;
To reck not at all what may befall,
But to live and to love each day.

To make my body a temple pure
Wherein I dwell serene;
To care for the things that shall endure,
The simple, sweet and clean.
To oust out envy and hate and rage,
To breathe with no alarm;
For Nature shall be my anchorage,
And none shall do me harm.

To shun all lures that debauch the soul,
The orgied rites of the rich;
To eat my crust as a rover must
With the rough-neck down in the ditch.
To trudge by his side whate'er betide;
To share his fire at night;
To call him friend to the long trail-end,
And to read his heart aright.

A ROLLING STONE

To scorn all strife, and to view all life
With the curious eyes of a child,
From the plangent sea to the prairie,
From the slum to the heart of the Wild,
From the red-rimmed star to the speck of
sand,
From the vast to the greatly small;
For I know that the whole for good is
planned,
And I want to see it all.

To see it all, the wide world-way,
From the fig-leaf belt to the Pole;
With never a one to say me nay,
And none to cramp my soul.
In belly-pinch I will pay the price,
But God! let me be free;
For once, I know, in the long ago
They made a slave of me.

In a flannel shirt, from earth's clean dirt,
Here, pal, is my calloused hand!
Oh, I love each day as a rover may,
Nor seek to understand.
To *enjoy* is good enough for me;
The gipsy of God am I;

A ROLLING STONE

Then here's a hail to each flaring dawn!
And here's a cheer to the night that's gone!
And may I go a-roaming on
Until the day I die!

*Then every star shall sing to me
Its song of liberty;
And every morn shall bring to me
Its mandate to be free.
In every throbbing vein of me
I'll feel the vast Earth-call:
O body, heart and brain of me,
Praise Him who made it all!*

THE SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

"DENY your God!" they ringed me with
their spears;
Blood-crazed were they, and reeking from
the strife;
Hell-hot their hate, and venom-fanged their
sneers,
And one man spat on me and nursed a
knife.
And there was I, sore wounded and alone,
I, the last living of my slaughtered band.
Oh, sinister the sky, and cold as stone!
In one red laugh of horror reeled the
land.
And dazed and desperate I faced their
spears,
And like a flame out-leaped that naked
knife,
And like a serpent stung their bitter jeers:
"Deny your God, and we will give you
life."

THE SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

Deny my God! Oh, life was very sweet!
And it is hard in youth and hope to die;
And there my comrades dear lay at my feet,
And in that blear of blood soon must I
lie.

And yet . . . I almost laughed—it
seemed so odd,

For long and long had I not vainly tried
To reason out and body forth my God,
And prayed for light, and doubted—and
denied.

Denied the Being I could not conceive,
Denied a life-to-be beyond the grave. .
And now they ask me, who do not believe,
Just to deny, to voice my doubt, to save
This life of mine that sings so in the sun,
My only life!—O fools! 'tis easy done,
The bloom of youth yet red upon my
cheek,
I will deny . . . and yet I do not
speak.

“Deny your God!” their spears are all
agleam,
And I can see their eyes with blood-lust
shine;
Their snarling voices shrill into a scream,
And, mad to slay, they quiver for the
sign.

THE SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

Deny my God! yes, I could do it well;
Yet if I did, what of my race, my name?
How they would spit on me, these dogs of
hell!

Spurn me, and put on me the brand of
shame.

A white man's honour! what of that, I
say?

Shall these black curs cry "Coward" in
my face?

They who would perish for their gods of
clay—

Shall I defile my country and my race?

My country! what's my country to me now?

Soldier of Fortune, free and far I roam;
All men are brothers in my heart, I vow;

The wide and wondrous world is all my
home.

My country! reverent of her splendid Dead,
Her heroes proud, her martyrs pierced
with pain:

For me her puissant blood was vainly shed;

For me her drums of battle beat in vain,
And free I fare, half-heedless of her fate:

No faith, no flag, I owe—then why not
seek

This last loop-hole of life? Why hesitate?

I will deny . . . and yet I do not
speak.

THE SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

“Deny your God!” their spears are poised
on high,

And tense and terrible they wait the
word;

And dark and darker glooms the dreary
sky,

And in that hush of horror no thing
stirred.

Then, through the ringing terror and sheer
hate

Leaped there a vision to me—Oh, how
far!

A face, Her face . . . through all my
stormy fate

A joy, a strength, a glory and a star.

Beneath the pines, where lonely camp-fires
gleam,

In seas forlorn, amid the deserts drear,
How I had gladdened to that face of dream!

And never, never had it seemed so dear.

O silken hair that veils the sunny brow!

O eyes of grey, so tender and so true!

O lips of smiling sweetness! must I now

Forever and forever go from you?

Ah, yes, I must . . . for if I do this
thing,

How can I look into your face again?

THE SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

Knowing you think me more than half a
king,

I with my craven heart, my honour slain.
No! no! my mind's made up. I gaze above,
Into that sky insensate as a stone;

Not for my creed, my country, but my Love
Will I stand up and meet my death alone.
Then, though it be to utter dark I sink,

The God that dwells in me is not denied;
"Best" triumphs over "Beast"—and so I
think

Humanity itself is glorified. . . .

"And now, my butchers, I embrace my fate.
Come! let my heart's blood slake the
thirsty sod.

Curst be the life you offer! Glut your hate!
Strike! Strike, you dogs! I'll *not* deny
my God."

I saw the spears that seemed a-leap to slay,
All quiver earthward at the headman's
nod;

And in a daze of dream I heard him say:

"Go, set him free who serves so well his
God!"

THE GRAMOPHONE AT FOND-DU-LAC

THE GRAMOPHONE AT FOND-DU-LAC

Now Eddie Malone got a swell grammyfone, to draw all the trade to his store; An' sez he: "Come along for a season of song, which the like ye had nivver before."

Then Dogrib an' Slave, an' Yellow-knife brave, an' Cree in his dinky canoe, Confluated near, to see an' to hear Ed's grammyfone make its dayboo.

Then Ed turned the crank, an' there on the bank they squatted like bumps on a log. For acres around there wasn't a sound, not even the howl of a dog. When out of the horn there sudden was born such a marvellous elegant tone; An' then like a spell on that auddyence fell the voice of its first grammyfone.

THE GRAMOPHONE AT FOND-DU-LAC

"Bad medicine!" cried Old Tom, the One-eyed, an' made for to jump in the lake; But no one gave heed to his little stampede, so he guessed he had made a mistake. Then Roll-in-the-Mud, a chief of the blood, observed in choice Chippewayan:
"You've brought us canned beef, an' it's now my belief, that this here's a case of '*canned man.*'"

Well, though I'm not strong on the Dago in song, that sure got me goin' for fair. There was Crusoe an' Scotty an' Ma'am Shoeman Hank, an' Melber an' Bonchy was there.
'Twas silver an' gold, an' sweetness untold, to hear all them big guinneys sing;
An' thick all around an' inhalin' the sound, them Indians formed in a ring.

So solemn they sat, an' they smoked an' they spat, but their eyes sort o' glistened an' shone;
Yet nivver a word of approvin' occurred till that guy Harry Lauder came on.
Then hunter of moose an' squaw an' papoose jest laughed till their stum micks was sore;
Six times Eddie set back that record an' yet they hollered an' hollered for more.

THE GRAMOPHONE AT FOND-DU-LAC

I'll never forget that frame-up, you bet;
them caverns of sunset agleam;
Them still peaks aglow, them shadders be-
low, an' the lake like a petrified dream;
The teepees that stood by the edge of the
wood; the evenin' star blinkin' alone;
The peace an' the rest, an' final an' best, the
music of Ed's grammyfone.

Then sudden an' clear there rang on my ear
a song mighty simple an' old;
Heart-hungry an' high it thrilled to the sky,
all about "silver threads in the gold."
'Twas tender to tears, an' it brung back the
years, the mem'ries that hallow an'
yearn;
'Twas home-love an' joy, 'twas the thought
of my boy . . . an' right there I
vowed I'd return.

Big Four-finger Jack was right at my back,
an' I saw, with a kind o' surprise,
He gazed at the lake with a heartful of
ache, an' the tears irrigated his eyes.
An' sez he: "Cuss me, pard! but that there
hits me hard; I've a mother does
nuthin' but wait.
She's turned eighty-three, an' she's only got
me, an' I'm scared it'll soon be too late."

* * * * *

THE GRAMOPHONE AT FOND-DU-LAC

On Fond-du-Lac's shore I'm hearin' once
more that blessed old grammyfone play.
The summer's all 'gone, an' I'm still livin'
on in the same old haphazardous way.
Oh, I cut out the booze, an' with muscles an'
thews I corralled all the coin to go
back;
But it wasn't to be—he'd a mother, you see
—so I—*slipped it to Four-finger Jack.*

THE LAND OF BEYOND

THE LAND OF BEYOND

HAVE ever you heard of the Land of Beyond,

That dreams at the gates of the day?
Alluring it lies at the skirts of the skies,
And ever so far away;
Alluring it calls: O ye the yoke galls,
And ye of the trail overfond,
With saddle and pack, by paddle and track,
Let's go to the Land of Beyond!

Have ever you stood where the silences brood,

And vast the horizons begin,
At the dawn of the day to behold far away
The goal you would strive for and win?
Yet, ah! in the night when you gain to the height,
With the vast pool of heaven star-spawned,
Afar and a gleam, like a valley of dream,
Still mocks you a Land of Beyond.

THE LAND OF BEYOND

Thank God! there is always a Land of
Beyond

For us who are true to the trail;
A vision to seek, a beckoning peak,
A farness that never will fail;
A pride in our soul that mocks at a goal,
A manhood that irks at a bond,
And try how we will, unattainable still,
Behold it, our Land of Beyond!

SUNSHINE

SUNSHINE

I.

FLAT as a drum-head stretch the haggard
snows;

The mighty skies are palisades of light;
The stars are blurred; the silence grows
and grows;

Vaster and vaster vaults the icy night.
Here in my sleeping-bag I cower and pray:
"Silence and Night, have pity; stoop and
slay."

I have not slept for many, many days.

I close my eyes with weariness—that's all.
I still have strength to feed the drift-wood
blaze

That flickers weirdly on the icy wall.
I still have strength to pray: "God rest her
soul,
Here in the awful shadow of the Pole."

SUNSHINE

There in the cabin's alcove low she lies,
Still candles gleaming at her head and
feet;
All snow-drop white, ash-cold, with closed
eyes,
Lips smiling, hands at rest—O God, how
sweet!
How all unutterably sweet she seems . . .
Not dead, not dead, indeed—she dreams, she
dreams.

II.

“Sunshine,” I called her, and she brought,
I vow,
God's blessed sunshine to this life of mine
I was a rover, of the breed who plough
Life's furrow in a far-flung, lonely line;
The wilderness my home, my fortune cast
In a wild land of dearth, barbaric, vast.

When did I see her first? Long had I lain
Groping my way to life through fevered
gloom.
Sudden the cloud of darkness left my brain;
A velvet bar of sunshine pierced the room,
And in that mellow glory aureoled
She stood, she stood, all golden in its gold.

SUNSHINE

Sunshine! O miracle! the earth grew glad;
Radiant each blade of grass, each living
thing.

What a huge strength, high hope, proud
will I had!

All the wide world with rapture seemed
to ring.

Would she but wed me? *Yes*: then farèd
we forth

Into the vast, unvintageable North.

III.

*In Muskrat Land the conies leap,
The wavies linger in their flight;
The jewelled, snake-like rivers creep;
The sun, sad rogue, is out all night;
The great wood-bison paws the sand,
In Muskrat Land, in Muskrat Land.*

*In Muskrat Land dim streams divide
The tundras belted by the sky.
How sweet in slim canoe to glide,
And dream, and let the world go by!
Build gay camp-fires on greening strand!
In Muskrat Land, in Muskrat Land.*

IV.

And so we dreamed and drifted, she and I;
And how she loved that free, unfathomed
life!
There, in the peach-bloom of the midnight
sky,
The silence welded us, true man and wife.
Then North and North invincibly we
pressed
Beyond the Circle, to the world's white
crest.

And on the wind-flailed Arctic waste we
stayed,
Dwelt with the Huskies by the Polar sea.
Fur had they, white fox, marten, mink, to
trade,
And we had food-stuff, bacon, flour and
tea.
So we made snug, chummed up with all the
band:
Sudden the Winter swooped on Husky
Land.

V.

What was that ill so sinister and dread,
Smiting the tribe with sickness to the
bone,

SUNSHINE

So that we waked one morn to find them
fled;

So that we stood and stared, alone, alone?
Bravely she smiled and looked into my eyes;
Laughed at their troubled, stern, foreboding
pain;

Gaily she mocked the menace of the skies,
Turned to our cheery cabin once again,
Saying: "'Twill soon be over, dearest one,
The long, long night: then oh, the sun, the
sun!"

VI.

*God made a heart of gold, of gold,
Shining and sweet and true;
Gave it a home of fairest mould,
Blest it, and called it—You.*

*God gave the rose its grace of glow,
And the lark its radiant glee;
But, better than all, I know, I know
God gave you, Heart, to me.*

VII.

She was all sunshine in those dubious days;
Our cabin beacons with defiant light;

SUNSHINE

We chattered by the friendly drift-wood
 blaze;
 Closer and closer cowered the hag-like
 night.
A wolf-howl would have been a welcome
 sound,
 And there was none in all that stricken
 land;
Yet with such silence, darkness, death
 around,
 Learned we to love as few can under-
 stand.
Spirit with spirit fused, and soul to soul,
There in the sullen shadow of the Pole.

VIII.

What was that haunting horror of the
 night?
 Brave was she; buoyant, full of sunny
 cheer.
Why was her face so small, so strangely
 white?
 Then did I turn from her, heart-sick with
 fear;
Sought in my agony the outcast shows;
 Prayed in my pain to that insensate sky;
Grovelled and sobbed and cursed, and then
 arose:
“Sunshine! O heart of gold! to die! to
 die!”

SUNSHINE

IX.

She died on Christmas Day—it seems so sad
That one you love should die on Christ-
mas Day.

Head-bowed I knelt by her; O God! I had
No tears to shed, no moan, no prayer to
pray.

I heard her whisper: "Call me, will you,
dear?"

They say Death parts, but I won't go
away.

I will be with you in the cabin here;

Oh, I will plead with God to let me stay!
Stay till the Night is gone, till Spring is
nigh,

Till sunshine comes . . . be brave . . . I'm
tired . . . good-bye . . ."

X.

For weeks, for months I have not seen the
sun;

The minatory dawns are leprous pale;
The felon days malingering one by one;

How like a dream Life is! how vain!
how stale!

I, too, am faint; that vampire-like disease
Has fallen on me; weak and cold am I;

SUNSHINE

Hugging a tiny fire in fear I freeze:
The cabin must be cold, and so I try
To bear the frost, the frost that fights
decay,
The frost that keeps her beautiful alway.

XI.

*She lies within an icy vault;
It glitters like a cave of salt.
All marble-pure and angel-sweet,
With candles at her head and feet,
Under an ermine robe she lies.
I kiss her hands, I kiss her eyes:
"Come back, come back, O Love, I pray,
Into this house, this house of clay!
Answer my kisses soft and warm;
Nestle again within my arm.
Come! for I know that you are near;
Open your eyes and look, my dear.
Just for a moment break the mesh;
Back from the spirit leap to flesh.
Weary I wait; the night is black;
Love of my life, come back, come back!"*

XII.

Last night maybe I was a little mad,
For as I prayed despairful by her side,
Such a strange, antic visioning I had:
Lo! it did seem *her eyes were open wide.*

SUNSHINE

Surely I must have dreamed! I stared once
more . . .

No, 'twas a candle's trick, a shadow cast.
There were her lashes locking as before.

(Oh, but it filled me with a joy so vast!)
No, 'twas a freak, a fancy of the brain.
(Oh, but to-night I'll try again, again!)

XIII.

It was no dream; now do I know that Love
Leapt from the starry battlements of
Death;

For in my vigil as I bent above,
Calling her name with eager, burning
breath,

Sudden there came a change; again I saw
The radiance of the rose-leaf stain her
cheek;

Rivers of rapture thrilled in sunny thaw;
Cleft were her coral lips as if to speak;
Curved were her tender arms as if to cling;
Open the flower-like eyes of lucent blue,
Looking at me with love so pitying

That I could fancy Heaven shining
through.

"Sunshine," I faltered, "stay with me, oh,
stay!"

Yet ere I finished, on a moment's flight,

SUNSHINE

There in her angel purity she lay—
Ah! but I know she'll come again to-night.
*Even as radiant sword leaps from the
sheath,
Soul from the body leaps—we call it Death*

XIV.

Even as this line I write,
Do I know that she is near;
Happy am I, every night
Comes she back to bid me cheer.
Kissing her, I hold her fast;
Win her into life at last.

Did I dream that yesterday
On yon mountain ridge a glow
Soft as moonstone paled away,
Leaving less forlorn the snow?
Could it be the sun? Oh, fain
Would I see the sun again!

Oh, to see a coral dawn
Gladden to a crocus glow!
Day's a spectre dim and wan,
Dancing on the furtive snow;
Night's a cloud upon my brain:
Oh, to see the sun again!

SUNSHINE

You who find us in this place,
Have you pity in your breast;
Let us in our last embrace
Under earth sun-hallowed rest.
Night's a claw upon my brain:
Oh, to see the sun again!

XV.

The Sun! at last the Sun! I write these
lines,
Here on my knees, with feeble, fumbling
hand.
Look! in yon mountain cleft a radiance
shines,
Gleam of a primrose—see it thrill, expand,
Grow glorious. Dear God be praised! it
streams
Into the cabin in a gush of gold.
Look! there she stands, the angel of my
dreams,
All in the radiant shimmer aureoled;
First as I saw her from my bed of pain;
First as I loved her when the darkness
passed.
Now do I know that Life is not in vain;
Now do I know God cares, at last, at last!
Light outlives dark, joy grief, and Love's
the sum:
Heart of my heart! Sunshine! I come . . .
I come . . .

THE IDEALIST

OH, you who have daring deeds to tell!
And you who have felt Ambition's spell!
Have you heard of the louse who longed
to dwell

In the golden hair of a queen?
He sighed all day and he sighed all night,
And no one could understand it quite,
For the head of a slut is a louse's delight,
But he pined for the head of a queen.

So he left his kinsfolk in merry play,
And off by his lonesome he stole away,
From the home of his youth so bright and
gay,

And gloriously unclean.
And at last he came to the palace gate,
And he made his way in a manner straight
(For a louse may go where a man must
wait)

To the tiring-room of the queen.

THE IDEALIST

The queen she spake to her tiring-maid:
"There's something the matter, I'm afraid.
To-night ere for sleep my hair ye braid
Just see what may be seen."
And lo, when they combed that shining hair,
They found him alone in his glory there,
And he cried: "I die, but I do not care,
For I've lived in the head of the queen!"

ATHABASKA DICK

ATHABASKA DICK

WHEN the boys come out from Lac Labiche
in the lure of the early Spring,
To take the pay of the "Hudson's Bay,"
as their fathers did before,
They are all aglee for the jamboree, and
they make the Landing ring
With a whoop and a whirl, and a "Grab
your girl," and a rip and a skip and a
roar.
For the spree of Spring is a sacred thing,
and the boys must have their fun;
Packer and tracker and half-breed Cree,
from the boat to the bar they leap;
And then when the long flotilla goes, and
the last of their pay is done,
The boys from the banks of Lac Labiche
swing to the heavy sweep.
And oh, how they sigh! and their throats
are dry, and sorry are they and sick:
Yet there's none so cursed with a lime-kiln
thirst as that Athabaska Dick.

ATHABASKA DICK

He was long and slim and lean of limb, but
strong as a stripling bear;
And by the right of his skill and might he
guided the Long Brigade.
All water-wise were his laughing eyes, and
he steered with a careless care,
And he shunned the shock of foam and
rock, till they came to the Big Cas-
cade.
And here they must make the long *portage*,
and the boys sweat in the sun;
And they heft and pack, and they haul
and track, and each must do his trick;
But their thoughts are far in the Landing
bar, where the founts of nectar run:
And no man thinks of such gorgeous
drinks as that Athabaska Dick.

'Twas the close of day, and his long boat
lay just over the Big Cascade,
When there came to him one Jack-pot
Jim, with a wild light in his eye;
And he softly laughed, and he led Dick aft,
all eager, yet half afraid,
And snugly stowed in his coat he showed
a pilfered flask of "rye."
And in haste he slipped, or in fear he tripped,
but—Dick in warning roared—
And there rang a yell, and it befell that Jim
was overboard.

ATHABASKA DICK

Oh, I heard a splash, and quick as a flash I
knew he could not swim.

I saw him whirl in the river swirl, and
thresh his arms about.

In a queer, strained way I heard Dick say:
"I'm going after him,"

Throw off his coat, leap down the boat—
and then I gave a shout:

"Boys, grab him, quick! You're crazy,
Dick! Far better one than two!

Hell, man! You know you've got no
show! It's sure and certain death. . ."

And there we hung, and there we clung,
with beef and brawn and thew,

And sinews cracked and joints were
racked, and panting came our breath;

And there we swayed and there we prayed,
till strength and hope were spent—

Then Dick, he threw us off like rats and
after Jim he went.

With a mighty urge amid the surge of
river-rage he leapt,

And gripped his mate, and desperate he
fought to gain the shore;

With teeth agleam he bucked the stream,
yet swift and sure he swept

To meet the mighty cataract that waited
all aroar.

ATHABASKA DICK

And there we stood like carven wood, our
faces sickly white,
And watched him as he beat the foam,
and inch by inch he lost;
And nearer, nearer drew the fall, and
fiercer grew the fight,
Till on the very cascade crest a last fare-
well he tossed.
Then down and down and down they
plunged into that pit of dread;
And mad we tore along the shore to claim
our bitter dead.

And from that hell of frenzied foam, that
crashed and fumed and boiled,
Two little bodies bubbled up, and they
were heedless then;
And oh, they lay like senseless clay! and
bitter hard we toiled,
Yet never, never gleam of hope, and we
were weary men.
And moments mounted into hours, and
black was our despair;
And faint were we, and we were fain to
give them up as dead,
When suddenly I thrilled with hope: "Back,
boys! and give him air;
I feel the flutter of his heart . . . "
And, as the word I said,

ATHABASKA DICK

Dick gave a sigh, and gazed around, and
saw our breathless band;

And saw the sky's blue floor above, all
strewn with golden fleece;

And saw his comrade Jack-pot Jim, and
touched him with his hand;

And then there came into his eyes a look
of perfect peace.

And as there, at his very feet, the thwarted
river raved,

I heard him murmur low and deep: "Thank
God! the *whiskey's* saved."

CHEER

CHEER

It's a mighty good world, so it is, dear lass,
When even the worst is said.
There's a smile and a tear, a sigh and a
cheer,
But better be living than dead;
A joy and a pain, a loss and a gain;
There's honey and maybe some gall:
Yet still I declare, foul weather or fair,
It's a mighty good world after all.

For look, lass! at night when I break from
the fight,
My Kingdom's awaiting for me;
There's comfort and rest, and the warmth
of your breast,
And little ones climbing my knee.
There's fire-light and song—Oh, the world
'may be wrong,
Its empires may topple and fall:
My home is my care—if gladness be there,
It's a mighty good world after all.

CHEER

O heart of pure gold! I have made you a
fold,

It's sheltered, sun-fondled and warm.

O little ones, rest! I have fashioned a nest;

Sleep on! you are safe from the storm.

For there's no foe like fear, and there's no
friend like cheer,

And sunshine will flash at our call;

So crown Love as King, and let us all
sing—

“It's a mighty good world after all.”

THE RETURN

THE RETURN

THEY turned him loose; he bowed his head,
A felon, bent and grey.
His face was even as the Dead,
He had no word to say.

He sought the home of his old love,
To look on her once more;
And where her roses breathed above,
He cowered beside the door.

She sat there in the shining room;
Her hair was silver grey.
He stared and stared from out the gloom;
He turned to go away.

Her roses rustled overhead.
She saw, with sudden start.
"I knew that you would come," she said,
And held him to her heart.

THE RETURN

Her face was rapt and angel-sweet;
- She touched his hair of grey;

.
*But he, sob-shaken, at her feet,
 Could only pray and pray.*

THE JUNIOR GOD

THE Junior God looked from his place
In the conning-towers of heaven,
And he saw the world through the span of
space
Like a giant golf-ball driven.
And because he was bored, as some gods
are,
With high celestial mirth,
He clutched the reins of a shooting star,
And he steered it down to earth.

The Junior God, 'mid leaf and bud,
Passed on with a weary air,
Till lo! he came to a pool of mud,
And some hogs were rolling there.
Then in he plunged with gleeful cries,
And down he lay supine;
For they had no mud in paradise,
And they likewise had no swine.

THE JUNIOR GOD

The Junior God forgot himself;
He squelched mud through his toes;
With the careless joy of a wanton boy
His reckless laughter rose.
Till, tired at last, in a brook close by,
He washed off every stain;
Then softly up to the radiant sky
He rose, a god again.

The Junior God now heads the roll
In the list of heaven's peers;
He sits in the House of High Control,
And he regulates the spheres.
Yet does he wonder, do you suppose,
If, even in gods divine,
The best and wisest may not be those
Who have wallowed awhile with the
swine?

THE NOSTOMANIAC

THE NOSTOMANIAC

*On the ragged edge of the world I'll roam,
And the home of the wolf shall be my home,
And a bunch of bones on the boundless
 snows
The end of my trail . . . who knows, who
 knows!*

I'm dreaming to-night in the fire-glow,
 alone in my study tower,
 My books battalioned around me, my
 Kipling flat on my knee;
But I'm not in the mood for reading, I
 haven't moved for an hour; •
 Body and brain I'm weary, weary the
 heart of me;
Weary of crushing a longing it's little I
 understand,
 For I thought that my trail was ended, I
 thought I had earned my rest;
But oh, it's stronger than life is, the call
 of the hearthless land!
And I turn to the North in my trouble,
 as a child to the mother-breast.

THE NOSTOMANIAC

Here in my den it's quiet; the sea-wind taps
on the pane;
There's comfort and ease and plenty, the
smile of the South is sweet.
All that a man might long for, fight for and
seek in vain,
Pictures and books and music, pleasure
my last retreat.
Peace! I thought I had gained it, I swore
that my tale was told;
By my hair that is grey I swore it, by my
eyes that are slow to see;
Yet what does it all avail me? to-night,
to-night as of old,
Out of the dark I hear it—the Northland
calling to me.

And I'm daring a rampageous river that
runs the devil knows where;
My hand is athrill on the paddle, the
birch-bark bounds like a bird.
Hark to the rumble of rapids! Here in my
morris chair,
Eager and tense I'm straining—isn't it
most absurd?
Now in the churn and the lather, foam that
hisses and stings,
Leap I, keyed for the struggle, fury and
fume and roar;

THE NOSTOMANIAC

Rocks are spitting like hell-cats—Oh, it's a
sport for kings,
Life on a twist of the paddle . . .
there's my "Kim" on the floor.

How I thrill and I vision! Then my camp
of a night;
Red and gold of the fire-glow, net afloat
in the stream;
Scent of the pines and silence, little "pal"
pipe alight,
Body a-purr with pleasure, sleep un-
troubled of dream:
Banquet of paystreak bacon! moment of
joy divine,
When the bannock is hot and gluey, and
the teapot's nearing the boil!
Never was wolf so hungry, stomach cleav-
ing to spine . . .
Ha! there's my servant calling, says that
dinner will spoil.

What do I want with dinner? Can I eat
any more?
Can I sleep as I used to? . . . Oh, I abhor
this life!
Give me the Great Uncertain, the Barren
Land for a floor,
The Milky Way for a roof-beam, splen-
dour and space and strife:

THE NOSTOMANIAC

Something to fight and die for—the limpid
Lake of the Bear,
The Empire of Empty Bellies, the dunes
where the Dogribs dwell;
Big things, real things, live things . . .
here in my morris chair,
How I ache for the Northland! “Dinner
and servants”—Hell!

Am I too old, I wonder? Can I take one
trip more?

Go to the granite-ribbed valleys, flooded
with sunset wine,
Peaks that pierce the aurora, rivers I must
explore,
Lakes of a thousand islands, millioning
hordes of the Pine?

Do they miss me, I wonder, valley and peak
and plain?

Whispering each to the other: “Many a
moon has passed . . .

Where has he gone, our lover? Will he
come back again?

Star with his fires our tundra, leave us
his bones at last?”

Yes, I'll go back to the Northland, back to
the way of the bear,
Back to the muskeg and mountain, back
to the ice-leaguered sea.

THE NOSTOMANIAC

Old am I! What does it matter? Nothing
I would not dare;
Give me a trail to conquer—Oh, it is
“meat” to me!
I will go back to the Northland, feeble and
blind and lame;
Sup with the sunny-eyed Husky, eat
moose-nose with the Cree;
Play with the Yellow-knife bastards, boast-
ing my blood and my name:
I will go back to the Northland, for the
Northland is calling to me.

Then give to me paddle and whiplash, and
give to me tumpline and gun;
Give to me salt and tobacco, flour and a
gunny of tea;
Take me up over the Circle, under the
flamboyant sun;
Turn me foot-loose like a savage—that is
the finish of me.
I know the trail I am seeking, it's up by the
Lake of the Bear;
It's down by the Arctic Barrens, it's over
to Hudson's Bay;
Maybe I'll get there—maybe: death is set
by a hair . . .
Hark! it's the Northland calling! now
must I go away . . .

THE NOSTOMANIAC

*Go to the Wild that waits for me;
Go where the moose and the musk-ox be;
Go to the wolf and the secret snows;
Go to my fate . . . who knows, who
knows!*

AMBITION

AMBITION

THEY brought the mighty chief to town;
They showed him strange, unwonted
sights;
Yet as he wandered up and down,
He seemed to scorn their vain delights.
His face was grim, his eye lacked fire,
As one who mourns a glory dead;
And when they sought his heart's desire:
"Me like-um tooth same gold," he said.

A dental place they quickly found.
He neither moaned nor moved his head.
They pulled his teeth so white and sound;
They put in teeth of gold instead.
Oh, never saw I man so gay,
His very being seemed to swell:
"Ha, ha!" he cried, "Now Injun say
Me heap big chief, *me look like hell!*"

TO SUNNYDALE

TO SUNNYDALE

THERE lies the trail to Sunnydale,
Amid the lure of laughter.
Oh, how can we unhappy be
Beneath its leafy rafter!
Each perfect hour is like a flower,
Each day is like a posy.
How can you say the skies are grey?
You're wrong, my friend, they're rosy.

With right good will let's climb the hill,
And leave behind all sorrow.
Oh, we'll be gay! a bright to-day
Will make a bright to-morrow.
Oh, we'll be strong! the way is long
That never has a turning;
The hill is high, but there's the sky,
And how the West is burning!

TO SUNNYDALE

And if through chance of circumstance
We have to go bare-foot, sir,
We'll not repine—a friend of mine
Has got no feet to boot, sir.
This Happiness a habit is,
And Life is what we make it:
See! there's the trail to Sunnydale!
Up, friend! and let us take it.

THE BLIND AND THE DEAD

THE BLIND AND THE DEAD

SHE lay like a saint on her copper couch;
Like an angel asleep she lay,
In the stare of the ghoulish folks that slouch
Past the Dead and sneak away.

Then came old Jules of the sightless gaze,
Who begged in the streets for bread.
Each day he had come for a year of days,
And groped his way to the Dead.

"What's the Devil's Harvest to-day?" he
cried;

"A wanton with eyes of blue!
I've known too many a such," he sighed;
"Maybe I know this . . . mon Dieu!"

He raised the head of the heedless Dead;
He fingered the frozen face . . .
Then a deathly spell on the watchers fell—
God! it was still, that place!

THE BLIND AND THE DEAD

He raised the head of the careless Dead;
He fumbled a vagrant curl;
And then, with his sightless smile, he said:
"It's only my little girl.

"Dear, my dear, did they hurt you so!
Come to your daddy's heart . . ."
Aye, and he held so tight, you know,
They were hard to force apart.

No! Paris isn't always gay;
And the morgue has its stories, too:
You are a writer of tales, you say—
Then there is a tale for you.

THE ATAVIST

THE ATAVIST

WHAT are you doing here, Tom Thorne, on
the white top-knot of the world,
Where the wind has the cut of a naked
knife and the stars are rapier keen?
Hugging a smudgy willow fire, deep in a
lynx robe curled,
You that's a lord's own son, Tom Thorne
—what does your madness mean?

Go home, go home to your clubs, Tom
Thorne! home to your evening dress!
Home to your place of power and pride,
and the feast that waits for you!
Why do you linger all alone in the splendid
emptiness,
Scouring the Land of the Little Sticks on
the trail of the caribou?

THE ATAVIST

Why did you fall off the Earth, Tom
Thorne, out of our social ken?
What did your deep damnation prove?
What was your dark despair?
Oh, with the width of a world between, and
years to the count of ten,
If they cut out your heart to-night, Tom
Thorne, *her* name would be graven
there.

And you fled afar for the thing called Peace,
and you thought you would find it
here,
In the purple tundras vastly spread, and
the mountains whitely piled;
It's a weary quest and a dreary quest, but
I think that the end is near;
For they say that the Lord has hidden
it in the secret heart of the Wild.

And you know that heart as few men know,
and your eyes are fey and deep,
With a "something lost" come welling
back from the raw, red dawn of life:
With woe and pain have you greatly lain,
till out of abysmal sleep
The soul of the Stone Age leaps in you,
alert for the ancient strife.

THE ATAVIST

And if you came to our feast again, with
its pomp and glee and glow.

I think you would sit stone-still, Tom
Thorne, and see in a daze of dream
A mad sun goading to frenzied flame the
glittering gems of the snow,
And a monster musk-ox, bulking black
against the blood-red gleam.

I think you would see berg-battling shores,
and stammer and halt and stare

With a sudden sense of the frozen void,
serene and vast and still;

And the aching gleam and the hush of
dream, and the track of a great white
bear,

And the primal lust that surged in you as
you sprang to make your kill.

I think you would hear the bull-moose call,
and the gluttoned river roar,

And spy the hosts of the caribou shadow
the shining plain;

And feel the pulse of the silences, and
stand elate once more

On the verge of the yawning vastitudes
that call to you in vain.

THE ATAVIST

For I think you are one with the stars and
the sun and the wind and the wave
and the dew;

And the peaks untrod that yearn to God,
and the valleys undefiled;

Men soar with wings, and they bridle kings,
but what is it all to you,

Wise in the ways of the wilderness, and
strong with the strength of the Wild?

You have spent your life, you have waged
your strife where never we play a
part;

You have held the throne of the Great
Unknown, you have ruled a kingdom
vast:

.

*But to-night there's a strange, new trail for
you, and you go, O weary heart!*

*To the peace and rest of the Great Un-
guessed . . . at last, Tom Thorne,
at last.*

THE SCEPTIC

THE SCEPTIC

My Father Christmas passed away
When I was barely seven.
At twenty-one, alack-a-day,
I lost my hope of heaven.

Yet not in either lies the curse:
The hell of it's because
I don't know which loss hurt the worse
My God or Santa Claus.

THE ROVER

THE ROVER

I.

Oh, how good it is to be
Foot-loose and heart-free!
Just my dog and pipe and I, underneath
the vast sky;
Trail to try and goal to win, white road
and cool inn;
Fields to lure a lad afar, clear spring and
still star;
Lilting feet that never tire, green dingle,
faggot fire;
None to hurry, none to hold, heather hill
and hushed fold;
Nature like a picture-book, laughing leaf
and bright brook;
Every day a jewel bright, set serenely in
the night;
Every night a holy shrine, radiant for a
day divine.

THE ROVER

Weathered cheek and kindly eye, let the
wanderer go by.

Woman-love and wistful heart, let the
gipsy one depart.

For the farness and the road are his glory
and his goad.

Oh, the lilt of youth and Spring! Eyes
laugh and lips sing.

Yea, but it is good to be
Foot-loose and heart-free!

II.

Yet how good it is to come
Home at last, home, home!

On the clover swings the bee, overhead's
the hale tree.

Sky of turquoise gleams through, yonder
glints the lake's blue.

In a hammock let's swing, weary of wan-
dering;

Tired of wild, uncertain lands, strange
faces, faint hands.

Has the wondrous world gone cold? Am
I growing old, old?

Grey and weary . . . let me dream,
glide on the tranquil stream.

THE ROVER

Oh, what joyous days I've had, full, fervid,
gay, glad!

Yet there comes a subtle change, let the
stripling rove, range.

From sweet roving comes sweet rest, after
all, home's best.

And if there's a little bit of woman-love
with it,

I will count my life content, God-blest and
well spent . . .

Oh, but it is good to be

Foot-loose and heart-free!

Yet how good it is to come

Home at last, home, home!

BARB-WIRE BILL

BARB-WIRE BILL

At dawn of day the white land lay all
gruesome-like and grim,
When Bill McGee he says to me: "We've
got to do it, Jim.
We've got to make Fort Liard quick. I
know the river's bad,
But, oh! the little woman's sick . . .
why! don't you savvy, lad?"
And me! Well, yes, I must confess it
wasn't hard to see
Their little family group of two would soon
be one of three.
And so I answered, careless-like: "Why,
Bill! you don't suppose
I'm scared of that there 'babbling brook'?
Whatever you say—goes."

A real live man was Barb-wire Bill, with
insides copper-lined;
For "barb-wire" was the brand of
"hooch" to which he most inclined.

BARB-WIRE BILL

They knew him far; his igloos are on Kit-
tiegazuit strand.
They knew him well, the tribes who dwell
within the Barren Land.
From Koyokuk to Kuskoquim his fame was
everywhere;
And he did love, all life above, that little
Julie Claire,
The lithe, white slave-girl he had bought
for seven hundred skins,
And taken to his wickiup to make his moc-
casins.

We crawled down to the river bank, and
feeble folk were we,
That Julie Claire from God-knows-where,
and Barb-wire Bill and me.
From shore to shore we heard the roar the
heaving ice-floes make,
And loud we laughed, and launched our
raft, and followed in their wake.
The river swept and seethed and leapt, and
caught us in its stride;
And on we hurled amid a world that
crashed on every side.
With sullen din the banks caved in; the
shore-ice lanced the stream;

BARB-WIRE BILL

The naked floes like spooks arose, all jig-
ging and agleam.
Black anchor-ice of strange device shot up-
ward from its bed,
As night and day we cleft our way, and
arrow-like we sped.

But "Faster still!" cried Barb-wire Bill,
and looked the live-long day
In dull despair at Julie Claire, where white
like death she lay.
And sometimes he would seem to pray and
sometimes seem to curse,
And bent above, with eyes of love, yet
ever she grew worse.
And as we plunged and leapt and lunged,
her face was plucked with pain,
And I could feel his nerves of steel a-quiver
at the strain.
And in the night he gripped me tight as I
lay fast asleep:
"The river's kicking like a steer. . . .
run out the forward sweep!
That's Hell-gate Canyon right ahead; I
know of old its roar,
And . . . I'll be damned! *the ice is
jammed!* We've got to make the
shore!"

BARB-WIRE BILL

With one wild leap I gripped the sweep.
The night was black as sin.
The float-ice crashed and ripped and
smashed, and stunned us with its din.
And near and near, and clear and clear I
heard the canyon boom;
And swift and strong we swept along to
meet our awful doom.
And as with dread I glimpsed ahead the
death that waited there,
My only thought was of the girl, the little
Julie Claire;
And so, like demon mad with fear, I panted
at the oar,
And foot by foot, and inch by inch, we
worked the raft ashore.

The bank was staked with grinding ice, and
as we scraped and crashed,
I only knew one thing to do, and through
my mind it flashed:
Yet while I groped to find the rope, I heard
Bill's savage cry:
"That's my job, lad! It's me that jumps.
I'll snub this raft or die!"

BARB-WIRE BILL

I saw him leap, I saw him creep, I saw him
gain the land;
I saw him crawl, I saw him fall, then run
with rope in hand.
And then the darkness gulped him up, and
down we dashed once more,
And nearer, nearer drew the jam, and
thunder-like its roar.
Oh, God! all's lost . . . from Julie Claire
there came a wail of pain,
And then—the rope grew sudden taut, and
quivered at the strain;
It slacked and slipped, it whined and grip-
ped, and oh, I held my breath!
And there we hung and there we swung
right in the jaws of death.

A little strand of hempen rope, and how I
watched it there,
With all around a hell of sound, and dark-
ness and despair;
A little strand of hempen rope, I watched
it all alone,
And somewhere in the dark behind I heard
a woman moan;

BARB-WIRE BILL

And somewhere in the dark ahead I heard
a man cry out,
Then silence, silence, silence fell, and
mocked my hollow shout.
And yet once more from out the shore I
heard that cry of pain,
A moan of mortal agony, then all was still
again.

That night was hell with all the frills, and
when the dawn broke dim,
I saw a lean and level land, but never sign
of him.
I saw a flat and frozen shore of hideous
device,
I saw a long-drawn strand of rope that
vanished through the ice.
And on that treeless, rockless shore I found
my partner—dead.
No place was there to snub the raft, so—
he had served instead!
And with the rope lashed round his waist,
in last defiant fight,
He'd thrown himself beneath the ice, that
closed and gripped him tight;
And there he'd held us back from death, as
fast in death he lay . . .
Say, boys! I'm not the pious brand, but—
I just tried to pray.

BARB-WIRE BILL

And then I looked to Julie Claire, and sore
abashed was I,
For from the robes that covered her *I*
heard—a baby cry. . . .

.

Thus was Love conqueror of death, and
life for life was given;
And though no saint on earth, d'ye think
Bill's squared hisself with Heaven?

“?”

If you had the choice of two women to wed,
 (Though of course the idea is quite
 absurd),
And the first from her heels to her dainty
 head

Was charming in every sense of the word:
And yet in the past (I grieve to state)
She never had been exactly “straight.”

And the second—she was beyond all caviel,
 A model of virtue, I must confess;
And yet, alas! she was dull as the devil,
 And rather a dowd in the way of dress;
Though what she was lacking in wit and
 beauty
She more than made up for in “sense of
 duty.”

Now, suppose you must wed, and make no
 blunder,
 And either would love you, and let you
 win her—
Which of the two would you choose, I
 wonder,
 The stolid saint or the sparkling sinner?

JUST THINK!

JUST THINK!

Just think! some night the stars will gleam
Upon a cold, grey stone,
And trace a name with silver beam,
And lo! 'twill be your own.

That night is speeding on to greet
Your epitaphic rhyme.
Your life is but a little beat
Within the heart of Time.

A little gain, a little pain,
A laugh, lest you may moan;
A little blame, a little fame,
A star-gleam on a stone.

THE LUNGER

THE LUNGER

JACK would laugh an' joke all day;
Never saw a lad so gay;
Singin' like a medder lark,
Loaded to the Plimsoll mark
With God's sunshine was that boy;
Had a strangle-holt on Joy.
Held his head 'way up in air,
Left no callin'-cards on Care;
Breezy, buoyant, brave and true;
Sent his sunshine out to you;
Cheerfulest when clouds was black—
Happy Jack! Oh, Happy Jack!

Sittin' in my shack alone
I could hear him in his own,
Singin' far into the night,
Till it didn't seem just right
One man should corral the fun,
Live his life so in the sun;
Didn't seem quite natural
Not to have a grouch at all;
Not a trouble—not a lack—
Happy Jack! Oh, Happy Jack!

THE LUNGER

He was plumbful of good cheer
Till he struck that low-down year;
Got so thin, so little to him,
You could most see daylight through him.
Never was his eye so bright,
Never was his cheek so white.
Seemed as if somethin' was wrong,
Sort o' quaver in his song.
Same old smile, same hearty voice:
"Bless you, boys! let's all rejoice!"
But old Doctor shook his head:
"Half a lung," was all he said.
Yet that half was surely right,
For I heard him every night,
Singin', singin' in his shack—
Happy Jack! Oh, Happy Jack!

Then one day a letter came
Endin' with a female name;
Seemed to get him in the neck,
Sort o' pile-driver effect;
Paled his lip and plucked his breath,
Left him starin' still as death.
Somethin' had gone awful wrong,
Yet that night he sang his song.
Oh, but it was good to hear!
For there clutched my heart a fear,
So that I quaked listenin'
Every night to hear him sing.

THE LUNGER

But each day he laughed with me,
An' his smile was full of glee.
Nothin' seemed to set him back—
Happy Jack! Oh, Happy Jack!

Then one night the singin' stopped . . .
Seemed as if my heart just flopped;
For I'd learned to love the boy
With his gilt-edged line of joy,
With his glorious gift of bluff,
With his splendid fightin' stuff.
Sing on, lad, and play the game!
O dear God! . . . no singin' came,
But there surged to me instead—
Silence, silence, deep and dread;
Till I shuddered, tried to pray,
Said: "He's maybe gone away."

Oh, yes, he had gone away,
Gone forever and a day.
But he'd left behind him there,
In his cabin, pinched and bare,
His poor body, skin and bone,
His sharp face, cold as a stone.
An' his stiffened fingers pressed
Somethin' bright upon his breast:
Locket with a silken curl,
Poor, sweet portrait of a girl.

THE LUNGER

Yet I reckon at the last
How defiant-like he passed;
For there sat upon his lips
Smile that death could not eclipse;
An' within his eyes lived still
Joy that dyin' could not kill.

An' now when the nights are long,
How I miss his cheery song!
How I sigh an' wish him back!
Happy Jack! Oh, Happy Jack!

THE MOUNTAIN AND THE LAKE

THE MOUNTAIN AND THE LAKE

I KNOW a mountain thrilling to the stars,
Peerless and pure, and pinnacled with
snow;
Glimpsing the golden dawn o'er coral bars,
Flaunting the vanisht sunset's garnet
glow;
Proudly patrician, passionless, serene;
Soaring in silvered steeps where cloud-
surfs break;
Virgin and vestal—Oh, a very Queen!
And at her feet there dreams a quiet
lake.

My lake adores my mountain—well I know,
For I have watched it from its dawn-
dream start,
Stilling its mirror to her splendid snow,
Framing her image in its trembling heart;
Glassing her graciousness of greening wood,
Kissing her throne, melodiously mad.
Thrilling responsive to her every mood,
Gloomed with her sadness, gay when she
is glad.

THE MOUNTAIN AND THE LAKE

My lake has dreamed and loved since time
was born;

Will love and dream till time shall cease
to be;

Gazing to Her in worship half forlorn,

Who looks towards the stars and will not
see—

My peerless mountain, splendid in her
scorn. . . .

Alas! poor little lake! Alas! poor me!

THE HEADLINER AND THE BREADLINER

THE HEADLINER AND THE BREADLINER

Moko, the Educated Ape, is here,
The pet of vaudeville, so the posters say,
And every night the gaping people pay
To see him in his panoply appear;
To see him pad his paunch with dainty
cheer,
Puff his perfecto, swill champagne, and
sway
Just like a gentleman, yet all in play,
Then bow himself off stage with brutish
leer.

And as to-night, with noble knowledge
crammed,
I 'mid this human compost take my place,
I, once a poet, now so dead and damned,
The woeful tears half freezing on my
face:
"O God!" I cry, "let me but take his
shape,
Moko's, the Blest, the Educated Ape."

DEATH IN THE ARCTIC

DEATH IN THE ARCTIC

I.

I TOOK the clock down from the shelf;
"At eight," said I, "I shoot myself."
It lacked a *minute* of the hour,
And as I waited all a-cower,
A skinful of black, boding pain,
Bits of my life came back again. . . .

*"Mother, there's nothing more to eat—
Why don't you go out on the street?
Always you sit and cry and cry;
Here at my play I wonder why.
Mother, when you dress up at night,
Red are your cheeks, your eyes are bright;
Twining a riband in your hair,
Kissing good-bye you go down-stair.
Then I'm as lonely as can be.
Oh, how I wish you were with me!
Yet when you go out on the street,
Mother, there's always lots to eat." . . .*

DEATH IN THE ARCTIC

II.

For days the igloo has been dark;
But now the rag wick sends a spark
That glitters in the icy air,
And wakes frost sapphires everywhere;
Bright, bitter flames, that adder-like
Dart here and there, yet fear to strike
The gruesome gloom wherein *they* lie,
My comrades, oh, so keen to die!
And I, the last—well, here I wait
The clock to strike the hour of eight. . .

*"Boy, it is bitter to be hurled
Nameless and naked on the world;
Frozen by night and starved by day,
Curses and kicks and clouts your pay.
But you must fight! Boy, look on me!
Anarch of all earth-misery;
Beggard and tramp and shameless sot;
Emblem of ill, in rags that rot.
Would you be foul and base as I?
Oh, it is better far to die!
Swear to me now you'll fight and fight,
Boy, or I'll kill you here to-night." . . .*

DEATH IN THE ARCTIC

III.

Curse this silence soft and black!
Sting, little light, the shadows back!
Dance, little flame, with freakish glee!
Twinkle with brilliant mockery!
Glitter on ice-robed roof and floor!
Jewel the bear-skin of the door!
Gleam in my beard, illumine my breath,
Blanch the clock face that times my death!
But do not pierce that murk so deep
Where in their sleeping-bags they sleep!
But do not linger where they lie,
They who had all the luck to die! . . .

*'There is nothing more to say;
Let us part and go our way.
Since it seems we can't agree,
I will go across the sea.
Proud of heart and strong am I;
Not for woman will I sigh;
Hold my head up gay and glad:
You can find another lad.'* . . .

IV.

Above the igloo piteous flies
Our frayed flag to the frozen skies.

DEATH IN THE ARCTIC

Oh, would you know how earth can be
A hell—go north of Eighty-three!
Go, scan the snows day after day,
And hope for help, and pray and pray;
Have seal-hide and sea-lice to eat;
Melt water with your body's heat;
Sleep all the fell, black winter through
Beside the dear, dead men you knew.
(The walrus blubber flares and gleams—
O God! how long a minute seems!) . . .

*“ Mary, many a day has passed,
Since that morn of hot-head youth.
Come I back at last, at last,
Crushed with knowing of the truth;
How through bitter, barren years
You loved me, and me alone;
Waited, wearied, wept your tears—
Oh, could I atone, atone,
I would pay a million-fold!
Pay you for the love you gave.
Mary, look down as of old—
I am kneeling by your grave.” . . .*

DEATH IN THE ARCTIC

V.

Olaf, the Blonde, was the first to go;
Bitten his eyes were by the snow;
Sightless and sealed his eyes of blue,
So that he died before I knew.
Here in these poor weak arms he died:
"Wolves will not get you, lad," I lied;
"For I will watch till Spring come round;
Slumber you shall beneath the ground."
Oh, how I lied! I scarce can wait:
Strike, little clock, the hour of eight! . . .

*"Comrade, can you blame me quite?
The horror of the long, long night
Is on me, and I've borne with pain
So long, and hoped for help in vain.
So frail am I, and blind and dazed;
With scurvy sick, with silence crazed.
Beneath the Arctic's heel of hate
Avid for Death I wait, I wait.
Oh, if I falter, fail to fight,
Can you, dear comrade, blame me quite?"*

VI.

Big Eric gave up months ago.
But seldom do men suffer so.

DEATH IN THE ARCTIC

His feet sloughed off, his fingers died,
His hands shrunk up and mummified.
I had to feed him like a child;
Yet he was valiant, joked and smiled,
Talked of his wife and little one
(Thanks be to God that I have none),
Passed in the night without a moan,
Passed, and I'm here, alone, alone. . . .

*"I've got to kill you, Dick.
Your life for mine, you know.
Better to do it quick,
A swift and sudden blow.
See! here's my hand to lick;
A hug before you go—
God! but it makes me sick;
Old dog, I love you so.
Forgive, forgive me, Dick—
A swift and sudden blow." . . .*

VII.

Often I start up in the dark,
Thinking the sound of bells to hear.
Often I wake from sleep: "Oh, hark!
Help . . . it is coming . . . near
and near."

DEATH IN THE ARCTIC

Blindly I reel towards the door,
There the snow billows bleak and bare;
Blindly I seek my den once more,
Silence and darkness and despair.
Oh, it is all a dreadful dream!
Scurvy and cold and death and dearth;
I will awake to warmth and gleam,
Silvery seas and greening earth.
Life is a dream, its wakening,
Death, gentle shadow of God's wing. . . .

*"Tick, little clock, my life away!
Even a second seems a day.
Even a minute seems a year,
Peopled with ghosts that press and peer
Into my face so charnel white,
Lit by the devilish, dancing light.
Tick, little clock! mete out my fate.
Tortured and tense I wait, I wait." . . .*

VIII.

Oh, I have sworn! the hour is nigh:
When it strikes eight, I die, I die.

DEATH IN THE ARCTIC

Raise up the gun—it stings my brow—
When it strikes eight . . . all ready
 . . . *now*—

* * * * * * *

Down from my hand the weapon dropped;
Wildly I stared . . .

THE CLOCK HAD STOPPED.

IX.

Phantoms and fears and ghosts have gone.

Peace seems to nestle in my brain.

Lo! the clock stopped, I'm living on;

Heart-sick I was, and less than sane.

Yet do I scorn the thing I planned,

Hearing a voice: "O coward, fight!"

Then the clock stopped . . . whose was
the hand?

Maybe 'twas God's—ah, well, all's right.

Heap on me darkness, fold on fold!

Pain! wrench and rack me! What
care I?

Leap on me, hunger, thirst and cold!

I will await my time to die;

Looking to Heaven that shines above;

Looking to God, and love . . . and love.

DEATH IN THE ARCTIC

X.

Hark! what is that? Bells, dogs again!

Is it a dream? I sob and cry.

See! the door opens, fur-clad men

Rush to my rescue; frail am I;

Feeble and dying, dazed and glad.

There is the pistol where it dropped.

"Boys, it was hard—but I'm not mad . . .

Look at the clock—it stopped, it
stopped!

Carry me out. The heavens smile.

See! there's an arch of gold above.

Now, let me rest a little while—

Looking to God, and love . . . and love."

DREAMS ARE BEST

DREAMS ARE BEST

I JUST think that dreams are best,
Just to sit and fancy things;
Give your gold no acid test,
Try not how your silver rings;
Fancy women pure and good,
Fancy men upright and true;
Fortressed in your solitude,
Let Life be a dream to you.

For I think that Thought is all;
Truth's a minion of the mind;
Love's ideal comes at call;
As ye seek so shall ye find.
But ye must not seek too far;
Things are never what they seem:
Let a star be just a star,
And a woman—just a dream.

O you Dreamers, proud and pure,
You have gleaned the sweet of life!
Golden truths that shall endure
Over pain and doubt and strife.

DREAMS ARE BEST

I would rather be a fool
Living in my Paradise,
Than the leader of a school,
Sadly sane and weary-wise.

O you Cynics with your sneers,
Fallen brains and hearts of brass,
Tweak me by my foolish ears,
Write me down a simple ass!
I'll believe the real "you"
Is the "you" without a taint;
I'll believe each woman, too,
But a slightly damaged saint.

Yes, I'll smoke my cigarette,
Vestured in my garb of dreams,
And I'll borrow no regret;
All is gold that golden gleams.
So I'll charm my solitude
With the faith that Life is blest,
Brave and noble, bright and good . . .
Oh, I think that dreams are best!

THE QUITTER

THE QUITTER

WHEN you're lost in the Wild, and you're
scared as a child,
And Death looks you bang in the eye,
And you're sore as a boil, it's according to
Hoyle
To cock your revolver and . . . die.
But the Code of a Man says: "Fight all
you can,"
And self-dissolution is barred.
In hunger and woe, oh, it's easy to
blow . . .
It's the hell-served-for-breakfast that's
hard.

"You're sick of the game!" Well, now,
that's a shame.
You're young and you're brave and you're
bright.
"You've had a raw deal!" I know—but
don't squeal,
Buck up, do your damndest, and fight.

THE QUITTER

It's the plugging away that will win you
the day,

So don't be a piker, old pard!

Just draw on your grit; it's so easy to quit:

It's the keeping-your-chin-up that's hard.

It's easy to cry that you're beaten—and die;

It's easy to crawfish and crawl;

But to fight and to fight when hope's out of
sight—

Why, that's the best game of them all!

And though you come out of each gruelling
bout

All broken and beaten and scarred,

Just have one more try—it's dead easy to
die,

It's the keeping-on-living that's hard.

THE COW-JUICE CURE

THE COW-JUICE CURE

THE clover was in blossom an' the year was
at the June,
When Flap-jack Billy hit the town, likewise
O'Flynn's saloon.
The frost was on the fodder an' the wind
was growin' keen,
When Billy got to seein' snakes in Sullivan's
shebeen.

Then in meandered Deep-hole Dan, once
comrade of the cup:
"Oh, Billy, for the love of Mike, why don't
ye sober up?
I've got the gorgus recipay, 'tis smooth an'
slick as silk—
Jest quit yer strangle-holt on hooch, an'
irrigate with milk.
Lackteal flood is the lubrication you re-
quire;
Yer nervus frame-up's like a bunch of
snarled piano wire.

THE COW-JUICE CURE

You want to get it coated up with addypose
tishoo,
So's it will work elastic-like, an' milk's the
dope for you."

Well, Billy was complyable, an' in a month,
it's strange,
That cow-juice seemed to oppyrate a most
amazin' change.
"Call up the water-wagon, Dan, an' book
my seat," sez he.
"'Tis mighty queer," sez Deep-hole Dan,
"'twas just the same with me."
They shanghaied little Tim O'Shane, they
cached him safe away,
An' though he objurgated some, they
"cured" him night an' day;
"I'll never take another drink," sez Tim-
othy O'Shane.
An' pretty soon there came the change
amazin' to explain:
They tried it out on Spike Muldoon, that
toper of renown;
They put it over Grouch McGraw, the ter-
ror of the town.
They roped in "tanks" from far and near,
an' every test was sure,
An' like a flame there ran the fame of
Deep-hole's Cow-juice Cure.

THE COW-JUICE CURE

"It's mighty queer," sez Deep-hole Dan,
"I'm puzzled through and through;
It's only milk from Riley's ranch, no other
milk will do."

An' it jest happened on that night, with no
predictive plan,

He left some milk from Riley's ranch a-set-
tin' in a pan;

An' picture his amazement when he poured
that milk next day—

There in the bottom of the pan a dozen
"colours" lay.

"Well, what d'ye know 'bout that?" sez
Dan; "Gosh-ding my dasted eyes,

We've been an' had the Gold Cure, Bill, an'
none of us was wise!

The milk's free-millin', that's a cinch;
there's colours everywhere.

Now, let us figger this thing out—how does
the dust git there?

'Gold from the grass-roots down,' they
say—why, Bill! we've got it cold—

Them cows what nibbles up the grass, jest
nibbles up the gold.

We're blasted, bloomin' millionaires; dis-
semble an' lie low:

We'll follow them gold-bearin' cows, an'
prospect where they go."

THE COW-JUICE CURE

An' so it came to pass, fer weeks them
miners might be found
A-sneakin' round on Riley's ranch, an' sni-
pin' at the ground;
Till even Riley stops an' stares, an' pre-
sently allows,
"Them boys appear to take a mighty in-
terest in cows."
An' night an' day they shadowed each
auriferous bovine,
An' panned the grass-roots on their trail,
yet nivver gold they seen.
An' all that season, secret-like, they worked
an' nothin' found;
An' there was colours in the milk, but none
was in the ground.
An' mighty desperate was they, an' down
upon their luck,
When sudden, inspiration-like, the source
of it they struck.
An' where d'ye think they traced it to? It
grieves my heart to tell—
In the black sand at the bottom of that
wicked milkman's *well*.

WHILE THE BANNOCK BAKES

WHILE THE BANNOCK BAKES

LIGHT up your pipe again, old chum, and
sit awhile with me;

I've got to watch the bannock bake—how
restful is the air!

You'd little think that we were somewhere
north of Sixty-three,

Though where I don't exactly know, and
don't precisely care.

The man-size mountains palisade us round
on every side;

The river is a-flop with fish, and ripples
silver-clear;

The midnight sunshine brims yon cleft—
we think it's the Divide;

We'll get there in a month, maybe, or
maybe in a year.

It doesn't matter, does it, pal? We're of
that breed of men

With whom the world of wine and cards
and women disagree;

WHILE THE BANNOCK BAKES

Your trouble was a roofless game of poker
now and then,
And "raising up my elbow," that's what
got away with me.
We're merely "Undesirables," artistic more
or less;
My horny hands are Chopin-wise; you
quote your Browning well;
And yet we're fooling round for gold in
this damned wilderness:
The joke is, if we found it, we would
both go straight to hell.

Well, maybe we won't find it—and at least
we've got the "life."
We're both as brown as berries, and could
wrestle with a bear:
(That bannock's raising nicely, pal; just jab
it with your knife.)
Fine specimens of manhood they would
reckon us out there.
It's the tracking and the packing and the
poling in the sun;
It's the sleeping in the open, it's the rug-
ged, unfaked food:
It's the snow-shoe and the paddle, and the
camp-fire and the gun,
And when I think of what I was, I know
that it is good.

WHILE THE BANNOCK BAKES

Just think of how we've poled all day up
this strange little stream;
Since life began no eye of man has seen
this place before;
How fearless all the wild things are! the
banks with goose-grass gleam,
And there's a bronzy muskrat sitting sniff-
ing at his door.
A mother duck with brood of ten comes
squattering along;
The tawny, white-winged ptarmigan are
flying all about;
And in that swirly, golden pool, a restless,
gleaming throng,
The trout are waiting till we condescend
to take them out.

Ah, yes, it's good! I'll bet that there's no
doctor like the Wild:
(Just turn that bannock over there; it's
getting nicely brown):
I might be in my grave by now, forgotten
and reviled,
Or rotting like a sickly cur in some far,
foreign town.
I might be that vile thing I was—it all
seems like a dream;
I owed a man a grudge one time that
only life could pay;

WHILE THE BANNOCK BAKES

And yet it's half-forgotten now—how petty
these things seem!

(But that's "another story," pal; I'll tell
it you some day.)

How strange two "irresponsibles" should
chum away up here!

But round the Arctic Circle friends are
few and far between.

We've shared the same camp-fire and tent
for nigh on seven year,

And never had a word that wasn't cheer-
ing and serene.

We've halved the toil and split the spoil,
and borne each other's pack;

By all the Wild's freemasonry we're bro-
thers, tried and true;

We've swept on danger side by side, and
fought it back to back,

And you would die for me, old pal, and
I would die for you.

Now there was that time I got lost in Rory
Bory Land,

(How quick the blizzards sweep on one
across that Polar sea!)

You formed a rescue crew of One, and saw
a frozen hand

That stuck out of a drift of snow—and,
partner, it was Me.

WHILE THE BANNOCK BAKES

But I got even, did I not, that day the
paddle broke?

White water on the Coppermine—a
rock—a split canoe—

Two fellows struggling in the foam (one
couldn't swim a stroke):

A half-drowned man I dragged ashore
. . . and, partner, it was You.

.

In Rory Borealis Land the winter's long
and black;

The silence seems a solid thing, shot
through with wolfish woe;

And rowelled by the eager stars the skies
vault vastly back,

And man seems but a little mite in that
weird-lit plateau.

Nothing to do but smoke and yarn of
wild and mis-spent lives,

Beside the camp-fire there we sat—
what tales you told to me

Of love and hate, and chance and fate
and temporary wives!

In Rory Borealis Land, beside the
Arctic Sea.

WHILE THE BANNOCK BAKES

One yarn you told me in those days I
can remember still;
It seemed as if I visioned it, so sharp
you sketched it in;
Bellona was the name, I think; a coast
town in Brazil,
Where nobody did anything but seren-
ade and sin.
I saw it all—the jewelled sea, the golden
scythe of sand,
The stately pillars of the palms, the
feathery bamboo,
The red-roofed houses and the swart,
sun-dominated land,
The people ever children, and the
heavens ever blue.

You told me of that girl of yours, that
blossom of old Spain,
All glamour, grace and witchery, all
passion, verve and glow.
How maddening she must have been!
You made me see her plain,
There by our little camp-fire, in the
silence and the snow.
You loved her and she loved you. She'd
a husband, too, I think;
A doctor chap, you told me, whom she
treated like a dog,

WHILE THE BANNOCK BAKES

A white man living on the beach, a hopeless slave to drink—

(Just turn that bannock over there, that's propped against the log).

That story seemed to strike me, pal—it happens every day:

You had to go away awhile, then somehow it befell

The doctor chap discovered, gave her up, and went away;

You came back, tired of her in time . . . there's nothing more to tell.

Hist, see those willows silvering where swamp and river meet!

Just reach me up my rifle, quick; that's Mister Moose, I know—

There now, *I've got him dead to rights* . . . but, hell! we've lots to eat;

I don't believe in taking life—we'll let the beggar go.

Heigh-ho! I'm tired; the bannock's cooked; it's time we both turned in.

The morning mist is coral-kissed, the morning sky is gold.

WHILE THE BANNOCK BAKES

The camp-fire's a confessional—what
funny yarns we spin!

It sort of made me think a bit, that
story that you told.

The fig-leaf belt and Rory Bory are such
odd extremes,

Yet after all how very small this old
world seems to be . . .

Yes, that was quite a yarn, old pal, and
yet to me it seems

You missed the point: the point is that
the "doctor chap" . . . was *me*.

THE LOST MASTER

THE LOST MASTER

"AND when I come to die," he said,
"Ye shall not lay me out in state,
Nor leave your laurels at my head,
Nor cause your men of speech orate;
No monument your gift shall be,
No column in the Hall of Fame;
But just this line ye grave for me:
 'He played the game.'"

So when his glorious task was done,
It was not of his fame we thought;
It was not of his battles won,
But of the pride with which he fought;
But of his zest, his ringing laugh,
His trenchant scorn of praise or blame;
And so we graved his epitaph,
 "He played the game."

THE LOST MASTER

And so we, too, in humbler ways
Went forth to fight the fight anew,
And heeding neither blame nor praise,
We held the course he set us true.
And we, too, find the fighting sweet:
And we, too, fight for fighting's sake;
And though we go down in defeat,
And though our stormy hearts may break,
We will not do our Master shame:
We'll play the game, please God,
We'll play the game.

LITTLE MOCCASINS

LITTLE MOCCASINS

COME out, O Little Moccasins, and frolic on
the snow!

Come out, O tiny beaded feet, and twinkle
in the light!

I'll play the old Red River reel, you used to
love it so:

Awake, O Little Moccasins, and dance for
me to-night!

Your hair was all a gleamy gold, your eyes
a corn-flower blue;

Your cheeks were pink as tinted shells,
you stepped light as a fawn;

Your mouth was like a coral bud, with seed
pearls peeping through;

As gladdening as Spring you were, as
radiant as dawn.

LITTLE MOCCASINS

Come out, O Little Moccasins! I'll play so
soft and low,
The songs you loved, the old heart-songs
that in my mem'ry ring;
O child, I want to hear you now beside the
camp-fire glow!
With all your heart a-throbbing in the
simple words you sing.

For there was only you and I, and you were
all to me;
And round us were the barren lands, but
little did we fear;
Of all God's happy, happy folks the happiest
were we . . .
(Oh, call her, poor old fiddle mine, and
maybe she will hear!)

Your mother was a half-breed Cree, but you
were white all through;
And I your father was—but, well, that's
neither here nor there;
I only know, my little Queen, that all my
world was you,
And now that world can end to-night, and
I will never care.

LITTLE MOCCASINS

For there's a tiny wooden cross that pricks
up through the snow:

(Poor Little Moccasins! you're tired, and
so you lie at rest.)

And there's a grey-haired, weary man beside
the camp-fire glow:

(O fiddle mine! the tears to-night are
drumming on your breast.)

THE WANDERLUST

THE WANDERLUST

THE Wanderlust has lured me to the seven
lonely seas,

Has dumped me on the tailing-piles of
dearth;

The Wanderlust has haled me from the
morriss chairs of ease,

Has hurled me to the ends of all the
earth.

How bitterly I've cursed it, oh, the Painted
Desert knows,

The wraithlike heights that hug the pallid
plain.

The all-but-fluid silence—yet the longing
grows and grows,

And I've got to glut the Wanderlust again.

Soldier, sailor, in what a plight I've been!

Tinker, tailor, oh, what a sight I've seen!

And I'm hitting the trail in the morning,
boys,

And you won't see my heels for dust;

For it's "all day" with you

When you answer the cue

Of the Wan-der-lust.

THE WANDERLUST

The Wanderlust has got me . . . by the
belly-aching fire,
By the fever and the freezing and the
pain;
By the darkness that just drowns you, by
the wail of home desire,
I've tried to break the spell of it—in vain.
Life might have been a feast for me, now
there are only crumbs;
In rags and tatters, beggar-wise I sit;
Yet there's no rest or peace for me, im-
perious it drums,
The Wanderlust, and I must follow it.

Highway, by-way, many a mile I've
done;
Rare way, fair way, many a height I've
won;
But I'm pulling my freight in the morn-
ing, boys,
And it's over the hills or bust;
For there's never a cure
When you list to the lure
Of the Wan-der-lust.

The Wanderlust has taught me . . . it
has whispered in my heart
Things all you stay-at-homes will never
know.

THE WANDERLUST

The white man and the savage are but
three short days apart,
Three days of cursing, crawling, doubt
and woe.
Then it's down to chewing muclucs, to the
water you can *eat*,
To fish you bolt with nose held in your
hand.
When you get right down to cases, it's King
Grub that rules the races,
And the Wanderlust will help you under-
stand.

Haunting, taunting, that is the spell
of it;
Mocking, baulking, that is the hell of it;
But I'll shoulder my pack in the morn-
ing, boys,
And I'm going because I must;
For it's so-long to all
When you answer the call
Of the Wan-der-lust.

The Wanderlust has blest me . . . in a
ragged blanket curled,
I've watched the gulf of Heaven foam
with stars;

THE WANDERLUST

I've walked with eyes wide open to the
wonder of the world,
I've seen God's flood of glory burst its
bars.
I've seen the gold a-blinding in the ripples of
the sky,
Till I fancied me a bloated plutocrat;
But I'm freedom's happy bond-slave, and I
will be till I die,
And I've got to thank the Wanderlust for
that.

Wild heart, child heart, all of the world
your home.
Glad heart, mad heart, what can you do
but roam?
Oh, I'll beat it once more in the morn-
ing, boys,
With a pinch of tea and a crust;
For you cannot deny
When you hark to the cry
Of the Wan-der-lust.

The Wanderlust will claim me at the finish
for its own.
I'll turn my back on men and face the
Pole.
Beyond the Arctic outposts I will venture
all alone;
Some Never-never Land will be my goal.

THE WANDERLUST

Thank God! there's none will miss me, for
I've been a bird of flight;
And in my moccasins I'll take my call;
For the Wanderlust has ruled me,
And the Wanderlust has schooled me,
And I'm ready for the darkest trail of all.

Grim land, dim land, oh, how the vast-
ness calls!
Far land, star land, oh, how the still-
ness falls!
For you never can tell if it's heaven
or hell,
And I'm taking the trail on trust;
But I haven't a doubt
That my soul will leap out
On its Wan-der-lust.

THE TRAPPER'S CHRISTMAS EVE

it's mighty lonesome-like and drear,
Above the Wild the moon rides high,
And shows up sharp and needle-clear
The emptiness of earth and sky;
No happy homes with love aglow;
No Santa Claus to make believe:
Just snow and snow, and then more snow;
It's Christmas Eve, it's Christmas Eve.

And here am I where all things end,
And Undesirables are hurled;
A poor old man without a friend,
Forgot and dead to all the world;
Clean out of sight and out of mind. . .
Well, maybe it is better so;
We all in life our level find,
And mine, I guess, is pretty low.

THE TRAPPER'S CHRISTMAS EVE

Yet as I sit with pipe alight
Beside the cabin-fire, it's queer
This mind of mine must take to-night
The backward trail of fifty year.
The school-house and the Christmas tree;
The children with their cheeks aglow;
Two bright blue eyes that smile on me . .
Just half a century ago.

Again (it's maybe forty years),
With faith and trust almost divine,
These same blue eyes, abrim with tears,
Through depths of love look into mine.
A parting, tender, soft and low,
With arms that cling and lips that
 cleave—
Ah me! it's all so long ago,
Yet seems so sweet this Christmas Eve.

Just thirty years ago again . . .
We say a bitter, *last* good-bye;
Our lips are white with wrath and pain;
Our little children cling and cry.
Whose was the fault? It matters not,
For man and woman both deceive;
It's buried now and all forgot,
Forgiven, too, this Christmas Eve.

THE TRAPPER'S CHRISTMAS EVE

And she (God pity me!) is dead;
Our children men and women grown.
I like to think that they are wed,
With little children of their own
That crowd around their Christmas tree . .
I would not ever have them grieve,
Nor shed a single tear for me,
To mar their joy this Christmas Eve.

Stripped to the buff and gaunt and still
Lies all the land in grim distress.
Like lost soul wailing, long and shrill,
A wolf-howl cleaves the emptiness.
Then hushed as Death is everything.
The moon rides haggard and forlorn . . .
"O hark the herald angels sing!"
God bless all men—it's Christmas morn.

THE WORLD'S ALL RIGHT

THE WORLD'S ALL RIGHT

*Be honest, kindly, simple, true;
Seek good in all, scorn but pretence.
Whatever sorrow come to you,
Believe in Life's Beneficence!*

The World's all right; serene I sit,
And cease to puzzle over it.
There's much that's mighty strange, no
doubt;
But Nature knows what she's about;
And in a million years or so
We'll know more than to-day we know.
Old Evolution's under way—
What ho! the World's all right, I say.

Could things be other than they are?
All's in its place, from mote to star.
The thistledown that flits and flies
Could drift no hairsbreadth otherwise.
What is, must be; with rhythmic laws
All Nature chimes, Effect and Cause.
The sand-grain and the sun obey—
What ho! the World's all right, I say.

THE WORLD'S ALL RIGHT

Just try to get the Cosmic touch,
The sense that "you" don't matter much.
A million stars are in the sky;
A million planets plunge and die.
A million million men are sped;
A million million wait ahead.
Each plays his part and has his day—
What ho! the World's all right, I say.

Just try to get the Chemic view:
A million million lives made "you."
In lives a million you will be
Immortal down Eternity;
Immortal on this earth to range,
With never death, but ever change.
You always were, and will be aye—
What ho! the World's all right, I say.

Be glad! And do not blindly grope
For Truth that lies beyond our scope:
A sober plot informeth all
Of Life's uproarious carnival.
Your day is such a little one,
A gnat that lives from sun to sun;
Yet gnat and you have parts to play—
What ho! the World's all right, I say.

THE WORLD'S ALL RIGHT

And though it's written from the start,
Just act your best your little part.
Just be as happy as you can,
And serve your kind, and die—a man.
Just live the good that in you lies,
And seek no guerdon of the skies;
Just make your Heaven here, to-day—
What ho! the World's all right, I say.

Remember! in Creation's swing
The Race and not the man's the thing.
There's battle, murder, sudden death,
And pestilence, with poisoned breath.
Yet quick forgotten are such woes;
On, on the stream of Being flows.
Truth, Beauty, Love, maintain their sway—
What ho! the World's all right, I say.

The World's all right; serene I sit,
And joy that I am part of it;
And put my trust in Nature's plan,
And try to aid her all I can;
Content to pass, if in my place
I've served the uplift of the Race.
Truth! Beauty! Love! O Radiant Day—
What ho! the World's all right, I say.

THE BALDNESS OF CHEWED-EAR

THE BALDNESS OF CHEWED-EAR

WHEN Chewed-ear Jenkins got hitched up
to Guinneyveer McGee,
His flowin' locks, ye recollect, wuz frivol-
ous an' free;
But in old Hymen's jack-pot, it's a most
amazin' thing,
Them flowin' locks jest disappeared like
snowballs in the Spring;
Jest seemed to wilt an' fade away like dead
leaves in the Fall,
An' left old Chewed-ear balder than a
whitewashed cannon ball.

Now Missis Chewed-ear Jenkins, that wuz
Guinneyveer McGee,
Wuz jest about as fine a draw as ever
made a pair;
But when the boys got joshin' an' suggested
it was she
That must be infloosenshul for the old
man's slump in hair—
Why! Missis Chewed-ear Jenkins jest
went clean up in the air.

THE BALDNESS OF CHEWED-EAR

"To demonstrate," sez she that night, "the
lovin' wife I am,
I've bought a dozen bottles of Bink's Anty-
Dandruff Balm.
'Twill make yer hair jest sprout an' curl
like squash-vines in the sun,
An' I propose to sling it on till every drop
is done."
That hit old Chewed-ear's funny side, so he
lays back an' hollers:
"The day you raise a hair, old girl, you'll
git a thousand dollars."

Now, whether 'twas the prize or not 'tis
mighty hard to say,
But Chewed-ear didn't seem to have much
comfort from that day.
With bottles of that dandruff dope she fol-
lowed at his heels,
An' sprinkled an' massaged him even when
he ate his meals.
She waked him from his beauty sleep with
tender, lovin' care,
An' rubbed an' scrubbed assiduous, yet
never sign of hair.

THE BALDNESS OF CHEWED-EAR

Well, naturally all the boys soon tumbled
to the joke,
An' at the Wow-wow's Social 'twas Cold-
deck Davis spoke:
"The little woman's workin' mighty hard
on Chewed-ear's crown;
Let's give her for a three-fifths share a
hundred dollars down.
We stand to make five hundred clear—boys,
drink in whiskey straight:
'The Chewed-ear Jenkins Hirsute Propa-
gation Syndicate.'"

The boys wuz on, an' soon chipped in the
necessary dust;
They primed up a committy to negotiate
the deal;
Then Missis Jenkins yielded, bein' rather in
disgust,
An' all wuz signed an' witnessed, an' in-
vested with a seal.
They rounded up old Chewed-ear, an' they
broke it what they'd done;
Allowed they'd bought an interest in his
chance of raisin' hair;

THE BALDNESS OF CHEWED-EAR

They yanked his hat off anxious-like, opin-
in' one by one,

Their magnifyin'-glasses showed fine pro-
spects everywhere.

They bought Hairlene, an' Thatchem, an'
Jay's Cappillery Juice,

An' Seven Something Sisters, an' Macas-
sar an' Bay Rum,

An' everyone insisted on his speshul right
to sluice

His speshul line of lotion onto Chewed-
ear's cranium.

They only got thê merrier the more the old
man roared,

An' shares in "Jenkins' Hirsute" went sky-
highin' on the board.

The Syndicate wuz hopeful that they'd
demonstrate the pay,

An' Missis Jenkins labored in her perse-
verin' way.

The boys discussed on "surface rights," an'
"out-crops," an' so on,

An' planned to have it "crown" surveyed,
an' blueprints of it drawn.

THE BALDNESS OF CHEWED-EAR

They ran a base line, sluiced an' yelled, an'
everyone wuz glad,
Except the balance of the property, an' he
wuz "mad."

"It gives me pain," he interjects, "to
squash yer glowin' dream,
But you wuz fools when you got in on this
here 'Hirsute' scheme.

You'll never raise a hair on me"—when lo!
that very night,

Preparin' to retire, he got a most onpleasant
fright:

For on that shinin' dome of his, so prom-
inently bare,

He felt the baby outcrop of a second growth
of hair.

A thousand dollars! Sufferin' Cæsar! Well,
it must be saved!

He grabbed his razor recklesslike, an'
shaved an' shaved an' shaved.

An' when his head wuz smooth again he
gives a mighty sigh,

An' sneaks away, an' buys some Hair De-
stroyer on the sly.

THE BALDNESS OF CHEWED-EAR

So there wuz Missis Jenkins with "Re-
storin'" wagin' fight,
An' Chewed-ear with "Destroyer" circum-
ventin' her at night.
The battle wuz a mighty one; his nerves
wuz on the strain,
An' yet in spite of all he did that hair be-
gan to gain.

The situation grew intense, so quietly one
day
He gave his shareholders the slip, an' made
his get-away.
Jest like a criminal he skipped, an' aimed
to defalcate
The Chewed-ear Jenkins Hirsute Propaga-
tion Syndicate.
His guilty secret burned him, an' he sought
the city's din:
"I've got to get a wig," sez he, "to cover up
my sin.
It's growin', growin', night an' day; it's
most amazin' hair";
An' when he looked at it that night, he
shuddered with despair.
He shuddered an' suppressed a cry at what
his optics seen—
For on my word of honour, boys, that hair
wuz growin' *green*.

THE BALDNESS OF CHEWED-EAR

At first he guessed he'd get some dye, an'
try to dye it black;
An' then he saw 'twas Nemmysis wuz layin'
on his track.
He must jest face the music, an' confess
the thing he'd done,
An' pay the boys an' Guinneyveer the money
they had won.
An' then there came a big idee—it thrilled
him like a shock:
Why not control the Syndicate by buyin'
up the stock?

An' so next day he hurried back with
smoothly shaven pate,
An' for a hundred dollars he bought up
the Syndicate.
'Twas mighty frenzied finance an' the boys
set up a roar,
But "Hirsutes" from the market wuz with-
drawn for evermore.
An' to this day in Nuggetsville they tell the
tale how slick
The Syndicate sold out too soon, and
Chewed-ear turned the trick.

THE MOTHER

THE MOTHER

THERE will be a singing in your heart,
There will be a rapture in your eyes;
You will be a woman set apart,
You will be so wonderful and wise.
You will sleep, and when from dreams you
start,
As of one that wakes in Paradise,
There will be a singing in your heart,
There will be a rapture in your eyes.

There will be a moaning in your heart,
There will be an anguish in your eyes;
You will see your dearest ones depart,
You will hear their quivering good-byes.
Yours will be the heart-ache and the smart,
Tears that scald and lonely sacrifice;
There will be a moaning in your heart,
There will be an anguish in your eyes.

THE MOTHER

There will come a glory in your eyes,
There will come a peace within your
heart;
Sitting 'neath the quiet evening skies,
Time will dry the tear and dull the smart.
You will know that you have played your
part;
Yours shall be the love that never dies:
You, with Heaven's peace within your heart,
You, with God's own glory in your eyes.

THE DREAMER

THE DREAMER

THE lone man gazed and gazed upon his
gold,
His sweat, his blood, the wage of weary
days;
But now how sweet, how doubly sweet to
hold
All gay and gleamy to the camp-fire
blaze.
The evening sky was sinister and cold;
The willows shivered, wanly lay the
snow;
The uncommiserating land, so old,
So worn, so grey, so niggard in its woe,
Peered through its ragged shroud. The
lone man sighed,
Poured back the gaudy dust into its poke,
Gazed at the seething river listless-eyed,
Loaded his corn-cob pipe as if to smoke;
Then, crushed with weariness and hardship,
crept
Into his ragged robe, and swiftly slept.

.

THE DREAMER

Hour after hour went by; a shadow slipped
From vasts of shadow to the camp-fire
flame;
Gripping a rifle with a deadly aim,
A gaunt and hairy man with wolfish eyes.

* * * * *

The sleeper dreamed, and lo! this was his
dream:

He rode a streaming horse across a moor.
Sudden 'mid pit-black night a lightning
gleam

Showed him a wayside inn, forlorn and
poor.

A sullen host unbarred the creaking door,
And led him to a dim and dreary room.

Wherein he sat and poked the fire a-roar,
So that weird shadows jiggled athwart
the gloom.

He ordered wine. 'Od's blood! but he was
tired.

What matter! Charles was crushed and
George was King;

His party high in power; how he aspired!
Red guineas packed his purse, too tight
to ring.

The firelight gleamed upon his silken hose,
His silver buckles and his powdered wig.

THE DREAMER

What ho! more wine! He drank, he slowly
rose.

What made the shadows dance that mad-
cap jig?

He clutched the candle, steered his way
to bed,

And in a trice was sleeping like the dead.

.

Across the room there crept, so shadow
soft,

His sullen host, with naked knife agleam,
(A gaunt and hairy man with wolfish
eyes.) . . .

And as he lay, the sleeper dreamed a
dream:

* * * * *

'Twas in a ruder land, a wilder day.

A rival princeling sat upon his throne;

Within a dungeon dark and foul he lay,

With chains that bit and festered to the
bone.

They haled him harshly to a vaulted room,

Where one gazed on him with malignant
eyes). . .

And in that devil-face he read his doom,

Knowing that ere the dawn-light he must
die.

Well, he was sorrow-glutted; let them bring

Their prize assassins to the bloody work.

THE DREAMER

His kingdom lost, yet would he die a King:
Peerless and proud, as when he faced the
Turk.

Ah, God! the glory of that great Crusade!
The bannered pomp, the gleam, the
splendid urge!

The crash of reeking combat, blade to
blade!

The reeling ranks, blood-avid and
a-surge!

For long he thought; then feeling o'er him
creep

Vast weariness, he fell into a sleep.

.

The cell door opened; soft the headsman
came,

Within his hand a mighty axe a gleam,
(A gaunt and hairy man with wolfish
eyes.) . . .

And as he lay, the sleeper dreamed a
dream:

* * * * *

'Twas in a land unkempt, of life's red dawn
Where in his sanded cave he dwelt alone;
Sleeping by day, or sometimes worked upon
His flint-head arrows and his knives of
stone;

THE DREAMER

By night stole forth and slew the savage
boar,

So that he loomed a hunter of loud fame,
And many a skin of wolf and wild-cat wore,
And counted many a flint-head to his
name;

Wherefore he walked the envy of the band,
Hated and feared, but matchless in his
skill.

Till lo! one night deep in that shaggy land,
He tracked a yearling bear and made his
kill;

Then over-worn he rested by a stream,
And sank into a sleep too deep for dream

.

Hunting his food a rival caveman crept
Through those dark woods, and marked
him where he lay;

Cowered and crawled upon him as he slept,
Poising a mighty stone aloft to slay—
(A gaunt and hairy man with wolfish
eyes.) . . .

* * * * *

The great stone crashed. The dreamer
shrieked and woke,
And saw, fear-blinded, in his dripping cell,

THE DREAMER

A gaunt and hairy man, who with one stroke
Swung a great axe of steel that flashed
and fell. . . .

So that he woke amid his bed-room gloom,
And saw, hair-poised, a naked, thirsting
knife,
A gaunt and hairy man with eyes of doom—
And then the blade plunged down to drink
his life. . . .

So that he woke, wrenched back his robe,
and looked,
And saw beside his dying fire upstart
A gaunt and hairy man with finger
crooked—
A rifle rang, a bullet searched his heart.
. . . .

* * * * *

The morning sky was sinister and cold.
Grotesque the Dreamer sprawled, and did
not rise.
For long and long there gazed upon some
gold
A gaunt and hairy man with wolfish eyes.

AT THIRTY-FIVE

AT THIRTY-FIVE

'THREE score and ten, the Psalmist saith,
And half my course is well nigh run;
I've had my flout at dusty death,
I've had my whack of feast and fun.
I've mocked at those who prate and preach;
I've laughed with any man alive;
But now with sobered heart I reach
The Great Divide of Thirty-five.

And looking back I must confess
I've little cause to feel elate.
I've played the mummer more or less;
I fumbled fortune, flouted fate.
I've vastly dreamed and little done;
I've idly watched my brothers strive:
Oh, I have loitered in the sun
By primrose paths to Thirty-five!

AT THIRTY-FIVE

And those who matched me in the race,
Well, some are out and trampled down;
The others jog with sober pace;
Yet one wins delicate renown.
O midnight feast and famished dawn!
O gay, hard life, with hope alive!
O golden youth, forever gone,
How sweet you seem at Thirty-five.

Each of our lives is just a book
As absolute as Holy Writ;
We humbly read, and may not look
Ahead, nor change one word of it.
And here are joys and here are pains;
And here we fail and here we thrive;
O wondrous volume! What remains
When we reach chapter Thirty-five?

The very best, I dare to hope,
Ere Fate writes Finis to the tome;
A wiser head, a wider scope,
And for the gipsy heart, a home;
A songful home, with loved ones near,
With joy, with sunshine all alive:
Watch me grow younger every year—
Old Age! thy name is Thirty-five!

THE SQUAW-MAN

THE SQUAW-MAN

THE cow-moose comes to water, and the
beaver's overbold,

The net is in the eddy of the stream;
The tepee stars the vivid sward with russet,
red and gold,

And in the velvet gloom the fire's agleam.
The night is ripe with quiet, rich with in-
cense of the pine;

From sanctuary lake I hear the loon;
The peaks are bright against the blue, and
drenched with sunset wine,
And like a silver bubble is the moon.

Cloud-high I climbed but yesterday; a hun-
dred miles around

I looked to see a rival fire agleam.
As in a crystal lens it lay, a land without
a bound,

All lure, and virgin vastitude, and dream.

THE SQUAW-MAN

The great sky roared exultantly, the great
earth bared its breast,
All river-veined and patterned with the
pine;
The heedless hordes of caribou were stream-
ing to the West,
A land of lustrous mystery—and mine.

Yea, mine to frame my Odyssey: Oh, little
do they know
My conquest and the kingdom that I keep!
The meadows of the musk-ox where the
laughing grasses grow,
The rivers where the careless conies leap.
Beyond the silent Circle, where white men
are fierce and few,
I lord it, and I mock at man-made law;
Like a flame upon the water is my little
light canoe,
And yonder in the fireglow is my squaw.

A squaw-man! yes, that's what I am; sneer
at me if you will.
I've gone the grilling pace that cannot last;
With bawdry, bridge and brandy—Oh, I've
drunk enough to kill
A dozen such as you, but that is past.

THE SQUAW-MAN

I've swung round to my senses, found the
place where I belong;

The City made a madman out of me;
But here beyond the Circle, where there's
neither right nor wrong,

I leap from life's straight-jacket, and I'm
free.

Yet ever in the far forlorn, by trails of lone
desire;

Yet ever in the dawn's white leer of hate;
Yet ever by the dripping kill, beside the
drowsy fire,

There comes the fierce heart-hunger for a
mate.

There comes the mad blood-clamour for a
woman's clinging hand,

Love-humid eyes, the velvet of a breast:
And so I sought the Bonnet-plumes, and
chose from out the band

The girl I thought the sweetest and the
best.

O wistful women I have loved before my
dark disgrace!

O women fair and rare in my home land!

THE SQUAW-MAN

Dear ladies, if I saw you now I'd turn away
my face,

Then crawl to kiss your footprints in the
sand!

And yet—that day the rifle jammed—a
wounded moose at bay—

A roar, a charge . . . I faced it with
my knife:

A shot from out the willow-scrub, and there
the monster lay . . .

Yes, little Laughing Eyes, you saved my
life.

The man must have the woman, and we're
all brutes more or less

Since first the male ape shinned the family
tree;

And yet I think I love her with a husband's
tenderness,

And yet I know that she would die for me.

Oh, if I left you, Laughing Eyes, and never-
more came back,

God help you, girl! I know what you
would do . . .

I see the lake wan in the moon, and from
the shadow black

There drifts a little *empty* birch canoe.

THE SQUAW-MAN

We're here beyond the Circle, where there's
never wrong nor right;

We aren't spliced according to the law;
But by the gods I hail you on this hushed
and holy night

As the mother of my children, and my
squaw.

I see your little slender face set in the fire-
light glow;

I pray that I may never make it sad;

I hear you croon a baby song, all slumber-
soft and low—

God bless you, little Laughing Eyes! I'm
glad.

HOME AND LOVE

HOME AND LOVE

JUST Home and Love! the words are small,
Four little letters unto each;
And yet you will not find in all
The wide and gracious range of speech
Two more so tenderly complete:
When angels talk in Heaven above,
I'm sure they have no words more sweet
Than Home and Love.

Just Home and Love! it's hard to guess
Which of the two were best to gain;
Home without Love is bitterness;
Love without Home is often pain.
No! each alone will seldom do;
Somehow they travel hand and glove;
If you win one you must have two,
Both Home and Love.

HOME AND LOVE

And if you've both, well, then I'm sure
You ought to sing the whole day long;
It doesn't matter if you're poor
With these to make divine your song.
And so I praisefully repeat,
When angels talk in Heaven above,
There are no words more simply sweet
Than Home and Love.

I'M SCARED OF IT ALL

I'M SCARED OF IT ALL

I'm scared of it all, God's truth! so I am;
It's too big and brutal for me.
My nerve's on the raw and I don't give a
damn
For all the "hoorah" that I see.
I'm pinned between subway and overhead
train,
Where automobillics swoop down:
Oh, I want to go back to the timber again—
I'm scared of the terrible town.

I want to go back to my lean, ashen plains;
My rivers that flash into foam;
My ultimate valleys where solitude reigns;
My trail from Fort Churchill to Nome.
My forests packed full of mysterious gloom,
My ice-fields agrind and aglare:
The city is deadfalled with danger and
doom—
I know that I'm safer up there.

I'M SCARED OF IT ALL

I watch the wan faces that flash in the
street;

All kinds and all classes I see.

Yet never a one in the million I meet

Has the smile of a comrade for me.

Just jaded and panting like dogs in a pack;

Just tensed and intent on the goal:

O God! but I'm lonesome—I wish I was
back,

Up there in the land of the Pole.

I wish I was back on the Hunger Plateaus,
And seeking the lost caribou;

I wish I was up where the Coppermine flows
To the kick of my little canoe.

I'd like to be far on some weariful shore,

In the Land of the Blizzard and Bear;

Oh, I wish I was snug in the Arctic once
more,

For I know I am safer up there!

I prowl in the canyons of dismal unrest;

I cringe—I'm so weak and so small.

I can't get my bearings, I'm crushed and
oppressed

With the haste and the waste of it all.

I'M SCARED OF IT ALL

The slaves and the madmen, the lust and the
sweat,
The fear in the faces I see;
The getting, the spending, the fever, the
fret—
It's too bleeding cruel for me.

I feel it's all wrong, but I can't tell you
why—
The palace, the hovel next door;
The insolent towers that sprawl to the sky,
The crush and the rush and the roar.
I'm trapped like a fox and I fear for my
pelt;
I cower in the crash and the glare;
Oh, I want to be back in the avalanche belt,
For I know that it's safer up there!

I'm scared of it all. Oh, afar I can hear
The voice of my solitudes call!
We're nothing but brute with a little veneer,
And nature is best after all.
There's tumult and terror abroad in the
street;
There's menace and doom in the air;

I'M SCARED OF IT ALL

I've got to get back to my thousand-mile
beat;
The trail where the cougar and silver-tip
meet;
The snows and the camp-fire, with wolves
at my feet;
Good-bye, for it's safer up there.

*To be forming good habits up there;
To be starving on rabbits up there;
In your hunger and woe,
Though it's sixty below,
Oh, I know that it's safer up there!*

A SONG OF SUCCESS

A SONG OF SUCCESS

Ho! we were strong, we were swift, we
were brave.

Youth was a challenge, and Life was a
fight.

All that was best in us gladly we gave,
Sprang from the rally, and leapt for the
height.

Smiling is Love in a foam of Spring flowers:
Harden our hearts to him—on let us press!
Oh, what a triumph and pride shall be ours!
See where it beacons, the star of success!

Cares seem to crowd on us—so much to do;
New fields to conquer, and time's on the
wing.

Grey hairs are showing, a wrinkle or two;
Somehow our footstep is losing its spring.
Pleasure's forsaken us, Love ceased to smile;
Youth has been funeralled; Age travels
fast.

Sometimes we wonder: Is it worth while?
There! we have gained to the summit at
last.

A SONG OF SUCCESS

Aye, we have triumphed! Now must we
haste,

Revel in victory . . . why! what is
wrong?

Life's choicest vintage is flat to the taste—

Are we too late? Have we laboured too
long?

Wealth, power, fame we hold . . . ah!
but the truth:

Would we not give this vain glory of ours
For one mad, glad year of glorious youth,
Life in the Springtide, and Love in the
flowers?

THE SONG OF THE CAMP-FIRE

I.

HEED me, feed me, I am hungry, I am red-
tongued with desire;
Boughs of balsam, slabs of cedar, gummy
faggots of the pine,
Heap them on me, let me hug them to my
eager heart of fire,
Roaring, soaring up to heaven as a symbol
and a sign.
Bring me knots of sunny maple, silver birch
and tamarack;
Leaping, sweeping, I will lap them with
my ardent wings of flame;
I will kindle them to glory, I will beat the
darkness back;
Streaming, gleaming, I will goad them to
my glory and my fame.
Bring me gnarly limbs of live-oak, aid me
in my frenzied fight;
Strips of iron-wood, scaly blue-gum,
writhing redly in my hold;

THE SONG OF THE CAMP-FIRE

With my lunge of lurid lances, with my
whips that flail the night,
They will burgeon into beauty, they will
foliate in gold.
Let me star the dim sierras, stab with light
the inland seas;
Roaming wind and roaring darkness!
seek no mercy at my hands;
I will mock the marly heavens, lamp the
purple prairies,
I will flaunt my deathless banners down
the far, unhouseled lands.
In the vast and vaulted pine-gloom where
the pillared forests frown,
By the sullen, brutish rivers running
where God only knows,
On the starlit coral beaches when the
combers thunder down,
In the death-spell of the barrens, in the
shudder of the snows;
In a blazing belt of triumph from the palm-
leaf to the pine,
As a symbol of defiance, lo! the wilder-
ness I span;
And my beacons burn exultant as an ever-
lasting sign
Of unending domination, of the mastery
of Man;

THE SONG OF THE CAMP-FIRE

I, the Life, the fierce Uplifter, I that weaned
him from the mire;
I, the angel and the devil; I, the tyrant
and the slave;
I, the Spirit of the Struggle; I, the mighty
God of Fire;
I, the Maker and Destroyer; I, the Giver
and the Grave.

II.

Gather round me, boy and grey-beard,
frontiersmen of every kind.
Few are you, and far and lonely, yet an
army forms behind:
By your camp-fires shall they know you,
ashes scattered to the wind.

Peer into my heart of solace, break your
bannock at my blaze;
Smoking, stretched in lazy shelter, build
your castles as you gaze;
Or, it may be, deep in dreaming, think of
dim, unhappy days.

THE SONG OF THE CAMP-FIRE

Let my warmth and glow caress you, for
your trails are grim and hard;
Let my arms of comfort press you, hunger-
hewn and battle-scarred:
O my lovers! how I bless you with your
lives so madly marred!

For you seek the silent spaces, and their
secret lore you glean;
For you win the savage races, and the
brutish Wild you wean;
And I gladden desert places, where camp-
fire has never been.

From the Pole unto the Tropics is there
trail ye have not dared?
And because you hold death lightly, so by
death shall you be spared,
(As the sages of the ages in their pages
have declared.)

On the roaring Arkilini in a leaky bark
canoe;
Up the cloud of Mount McKinley, where
the avalanche leaps through;
In the furnace of Death Valley, when the
mirage glimmers blue.

THE SONG OF THE CAMP-FIRE

Now a smudge of wiry willows on the
weary Kuskokwim;
Now a flare of gummy pine-knots where
Vancouver's scaur is grim;
Now a gleam of sunny ceiba, when the
Cuban beaches dim.

Always, always God's Great Open: lo! I
burn with keener light
In the corridors of silence, in the vestibules
of night;
'Mid the ferns and grasses gleaming, was
there ever gem so bright?

Not for weaklings, not for women, like my
brother of the hearth;
Ring your songs of wrath around me, I was
made for manful mirth,
In the lusty, gusty greatness, on the bald
spots of the earth.

Men, my masters! Men, my lovers! ye have
fought and ye have bled;
Gather round my ruddy embers, softly
glowing is my bed;
By my heart of solace dreaming, rest ye
and be comforted!

THE SONG OF THE CAMP-FIRE

III.

I am dying, O my masters! by my fitful
flame ye sleep;

My purple plumes of glory droop forlorn.
Grey ashes choke and cloak me, and above
the pines there creep

The stealthy silver moccasins of morn.
There comes a countless army, it's the
Legion of the Light;

It tramps in gleaming triumph round the
world;

And before its jewelled lances all the
shadows of the night

Back in to abysmal darknesses are hurled

Leap to life again, my lovers! ye must toil
and never tire;

The day of daring, doing, brightens clear,
When the bed of spicy cedar and the jovial
camp-fire

Must only be a memory of cheer.
There is hope and golden promise in the
vast, portentous dawn;

There is glamour in the glad, effluent sky:
Go and leave me; I will dream of you and
love you when you're gone;

I have served you, O my masters! let me
die.

THE SONG OF THE CAMP-FIRE

A little heap of ashes, grey and sodden by
the rain,
Wind-scattered, blurred and blotted by
the snow;
Let that be all to tell of me, and glorious
again,
Ye things of greening gladness, leap and
glow!
A black scar in the sunshine by the palm-
leaf or the pine,
Blind to the night and dead to all desire;
Yet oh, of life and uplift what a symbol
and a sign!
Yet oh, of power and conquest what a
destiny is mine!
A little heap of ashes—Yea! a miracle
divine,
The foot-print of a god, all-radiant Fire

HER LETTER

HER LETTER

" I'm taking pen in hand this night, and hard
it is for me;

My poor old fingers tremble so, my hand
is stiff and slow,
And even with my glasses on I'm troubled
sore to see . . .

You'd little know your mother, boy; you'd
little, little know.

You mind how brisk and bright I was, how
straight and trim and smart;

'Tis weariful I am the now, and bent and
frail and grey.

I'm waiting at the road's end, lad! and all
that's in my heart

Is just to see my boy again before I'm
called away.

" Oh, well I mind the sorry day you crossed
the gurly sea;

'Twas like the heart was torn from me, a
waeful wife was I.

HER LETTER

You said that you'd be home again in two
years, maybe three;
But nigh a score of years have gone, and
still the years go by.
I know it's cruel hard for you, you've
bairnies of your own;
I know the siller's hard to win, and folks
have used you ill:
But oh, think of your mother, lad, that's
waiting by her lone!
And even if you canna come—*just write
and say you will.*

"Aye, even though there's little hope, just
promise that you'll try.
It's weary, weary waiting, lad; just say
you'll come next year.
I'm thinking there will be no 'next'; I'm
thinking soon I'll lie
With all the ones I've laid away . . .
but oh, the hope will cheer!
You know you're all that's left to me, and
we are seas apart;
But if you'll only say you'll come, then
will I hope and pray.
I'm waiting by the grave-side, lad; and all
that's in my heart
Is just to see my boy again before I'm
called away."

THE MAN WHO KNEW

THE MAN WHO KNEW

THE Dreamer visioned Life as it might be,
And from his dream forthright a picture
grew,
A painting all the people thronged to see,
And joyed therein—till came the Man
Who Knew,
Saying: "'Tis bad! Why do ye gape, ye
fools?
He painteth not according to the schools."

The Dreamer probed Life's mystery of woe,
And in a book he sought to give the clue;
The people read, and saw that it was so,
And read again—then came the Man Who
Knew,
Saying: "Ye witless ones! this book is vile;
It hath not got the rudiments of style."

Love smote the Dreamer's lips, and silver-
clear
He sang a song so sweet, so tender true,

THE MAN WHO KNEW

That all the market-place was thrilled to
hear,

And listened rapt—till came the Man
Who Knew,
Saying: "His technique's wrong; he singeth
ill.

Waste not your time." The singer's voice
was still.

And then the people roused as if from sleep,
Crying: "What care we if it be not Art!
Hath he not charmed us, made us laugh and
weep?

Come, let us crown him where he sits
apart."

Then, with his picture spurned, his book
unread,

His song unsung, they found their Dreamer
—*dead*.

THE LOGGER

THE LOGGER

IN the moonless, misty night, with my little
pipe alight,

I am sitting by the camp-fire's fading
cheer;

Oh, the dew is falling chill on the dim,
deer-haunted hill,

And the breakers in the bay are moaning
drear.

The toilful hours are sped, the boys are long
abed,

And I alone a weary vigil keep;

In the sightless, sullen sky I can hear the
night-hawk cry,

And the frogs in frenzied chorus from
the creek.

And somehow the ember's glow brings me
back the long ago,

The days of merry laughter and light
song;

When I sped the hours away with the gayest
of the gay

In the giddy whirl of fashion's festal
throng.

THE LOGGER

Oh, I ran a grilling race and I little recked
the pace,
For the lust of youth ran riot in my
blood;
But at last I made a stand in this God-
forsaken land
Of the pine-tree and the mountain and the
flood.

And now I've got to stay, with an overdraft
to pay
For pleasure in the past with future pain;
And I'm not the chap to whine, for if the
chance were mine
I know I'd choose the old life once again,
With its woman's eyes ashine, and its flood
of golden wine;
Its fever and its frolic and its fun;
The old life with its din, its laughter and
its sin—
And chuck me in the gutter when it's
done.

Ah, well! it's past and gone, and the
memory is wan
That conjures up each old familiar face;
And here by fortune hurled, I am dead to
all the world,
And I've learned to lose my pride and
keep my place.

THE LOGGER

My ways are hard and rough, and my arms
are strong and tough,

And I hew the dizzy pine till darkness
falls;

And sometimes I take a dive, just to keep
my heart alive,

Among the gay saloons and dancing-halls.

In the distant, dinfu town just a little drink,
to drown

The cares that crowd and canker in my
brain;

Just a little joy to still set my pulses all
athrill,

Then back to brutish labour once again.
And things will go on so until one day I
shall know

That Death has got me cinched beyond a
doubt;

Then I'll crawl away from sight, and
morosely in the night

My weary, wasted life will peter out.

Then the boys will gather round, and they'll
launch me in the ground,

And pile on stones the timber wolf to
foil;

THE LOGGER

And the moaning pine will wave overhead
a nameless grave,
Where the blacksnake in the sunshine
loves to coil.
And they'll leave me there alone, and per-
haps with softened tone
Speak of me sometimes in the camp-fire's
glow,
As a played-out, broken chum, who has gone
to Kingdom Come,
And who went the pace in England long
ago.

THE PASSING OF THE YEAR

THE PASSING OF THE YEAR

My glass is filled, my pipe is lit,
My den is all a cosy glow;
And snug before the fire I sit,
And wait to *feel* the old year go.
I dedicate to solemn thought
Amid my too-unthinking days,
This sober moment, sadly fraught
With much of blame, with little praise

Old Year! upon the Stage of Time
You stand to bow your last adieu;
A moment, and the prompter's chime
Will ring the curtain down on you.
Your mien is sad, your step is slow;
You falter as a Sage in pain;
Yet turn, Old Year, before you go,
And face your audience again.

That sphynx-like face, remote, austere,
Let us all read, whate'er the cost:
O Maiden! why that bitter tear?
Is it for dear one you have lost?

THE PASSING OF THE YEAR

Is it for fond illusion gone?
For trusted lover proved untrue?
O sweet girl-face, so sad, so wan,
What hath the Old Year meant to you?

And you, O neighbour on my right,
So sleek, so prosperously clad!
What see you in that aged wight
That makes your smile so gay and glad?
What opportunity unmissed?
What golden gain, what pride of place?
What splendid hope? O Optimist!
What read you in that withered face?

And you, deep shrinking in the gloom,
What find you in that filmy gaze?
What menace of a tragic doom?
What dark, condemning yesterdays?
What urge to crime, what evil done?
What cold, confronting shape of fear?
O haggard, haunted, hidden One,
What see you in the dying year?

And so from face to face I flit,
The countless eyes that stare and stare;
Some are with approbation lit,
And some are shadowed with despair.

THE PASSING OF THE YEAR

Some show a smile and some a frown;
Some joy and hope, some pain and woe:
Enough! Oh, ring that curtain down!
Old weary year! it's time to go.

My pipe is out, my glass is dry;
My fire is almost ashes too;
But once again, before you go,
And I prepare to meet the New:
Old Year! a parting word that's true,
For we've been comrades, you and I—
I thank God for each day of you;
There! bless you now! Old Year, good-
bye!

THE GHOSTS

THE GHOSTS

SMITH, great writer of stories, drank;
found it immortalized his pen;
Fused in his brain-pan, else a blank, heavens
of glory now and then;
Gave him the magical genius touch; God-
given power to gouge out, fling
Flat in your face a soul-thought—Bing!
Twiddle your heart-strings in his
clutch.

“Bah!” said Smith, “let my body lie stripped
to the buff in swinish shame,
If I can blaze in the radiant sky out of ador-
ing stars my name.

Sober am I nonentitized; drunk am I more
than half a god.

Well, let the flesh be sacrificed; spirit shall
speak and shame the clod.

Who would not gladly, gladly give Life to
do one thing that will live?”

THE GHOSTS

Smith had a friend, we'll call him Brown;
dearer than brothers were those two.
When in the wassail Smith would drown,
Brown would rescue and pull him
through.
When Brown was needful Smith would
lend; so it fell as the years went by,
Each on the other would depend: then at
the last Smith came to die.

There Brown sat in the sick man's room,
still as a stone in his despair;
Smith bent on him his eyes of doom, shook
back his lion mane of hair;
Said: "Is there one in my chosen line,
writer of forthright tales, my peer?
Look in that little desk of mine; there is a
package, bring it here.
Story of storics, gem of all; essence and
triumph, key and clue;
Tale of a loving woman's fall; soul swept
hellward, and God! it's true.
I was the man—Oh, yes, I've paid, paid with
mighty and mordant pain.
Look! here's the masterpiece I've made out
of my sin, my manhood slain.

THE GHOSTS

Art supreme! yet the world would stare,
know my mistress and blaze my
shame.

I have a wife and daughter—there! take it
and thrust it in the flame.”

Brown answered: “ Master, you have dipped
pen in your heart, your phrases sear.
Ruthless, unflinching, you have stripped
naked your soul and set it here.

Have I not loved you well and true? See!
between us the shadows drift;

This bit of blood and tears means You—oh,
let me have it, a parting gift.

Sacred I'll hold it, a trust divine; sacred
your honour, her dark despair;

Never shall it see printed line: here, by the
living God I swear.”

Brown on a Bible laid his hand; Smith,
great writer of stories, sighed:

“ Comrade, I trust you, and understand.
Keep my secret!” And so he died.

Smith was buried—upsoared his sales; lured
you his books in every store;

Exquisite, whimsy, heart-wrung tales; men
devoured them and craved for more.

THE GHOSTS

So when it slyly got about Brown had a
posthumous manuscript,
Jones, the publisher, sought him out, into
his pocket deep he dipped.
“A thousand dollars?” Brown shook his
head. “The story is not for sale,” he
said.

Jones went away, then others came.
Tempted and taunted, Brown was true.
Guarded at friendship's shrine, the fame of
the unpublished story grew and grew.
It's a long, long lane that has no end, but
some lanes end in the Potter's field;
Smith to Brown had been more than friend:
patron, protector, spur and shield.
Poor, loving-wistful, dreamy Brown, long
and lean, with a smile askew,
Friendless he wandered up and down, gaunt
as a wolf, as hungry, too.
Brown with his lilt of saucy rhyme, Brown
with his tilt of tender mirth,
Garretless in the gloom and grime, singing
his glad, mad songs of earth:
So at last with a faith divine, down and
down to the Hunger-line.

THE GHOSTS

There as he stood in a woeful plight, tears
a-freeze on his sharp cheek-bones,
Who should chance to behold his plight but
the publisher, the plethoric Jones;
Peered at him for a little while, held out a
bill: "*Now*, will you sell?"
Brown scanned it with his twisted smile,
"A thousand dollars! you go to hell!"

Brown enrolled in the homeless host, sleep-
ing anywhere, anywhen;
Suffered, strove, became a ghost, slave of
the lamp for other men;
For What's-his-name and So-and-so in the
abyss his soul he stripped,
Yet in his want, his worst of woe, held he
fast to the manuscript.
Then one day as he chewed his pen, half in
hunger and half despair,
Creaked the door of his garret den; Dick,
his brother, was standing there.
Down on the pallet bed he sank, ashen his
face, his voice a wail:
"Save me, brother! I've robbed the bank;
to-morrow it's ruin, capture, gaol.
Yet there's a chance: I could to-day pay
back the money, save our name;
You have a manuscript, they say, worth a
thousand—think, man! the shame . . ."

THE GHOSTS

Brown with his heart pain-pierced the while,
with his stern, starved face, and his
lips stone-pale,
Shuddered and smiled his twisted smile:
"Brother, I guess you go to gaol."

While poor Brown in the leer of dawn
wrestled with God for the sacred fire,
Came there a woman weak and wan, out of
the mob, the murk, the mire;
Frail as a reed, a fellow ghost, weary with
woe, with sorrowing;
Two pale souls in the legion lost; lo! Love
bent with a tender wing,
Taught them a joy so deep, so true, it
seemed that the whole world-fabric
shook,
Thrilled and dissolved in radiant dew: then
Brown made him a golden book,
Full of the faith that Life is good, that the
earth is a dream divinely fair,
Lauding his gem of womanhood, in many a
lyric rich and rare;
Took it to Jones, who shook his head: "I
will consider it," he said.

While he considered, Brown's wife lay
clutched in the tentacles of pain;
Then came the doctor, grave and gray;
spoke of decline, of nervous strain;

THE GHOSTS

Hinted Egypt, the South of France—Brown
with terror was tiger-gripped.

Where was the money? What the chance?

Pitiful God! . . . the manuscript!

A thousand dollars—his only hope! He
gazed and gazed at the garret wall . .

Reached at last for the envelope, turned to
his wife and told her all.

Told of his friend, his promise true; told
like his very heart would break;

“Oh, my dearest! what shall I do? Shall I
not sell it for your sake?”

Ghost-like she lay, as still as doom; turned
to the wall her weary head;

Icy-cold in the pallid gloom, silent as death
. . . at last she said:

“Do, my husband! Keep your vow! Guard
his secret and let me die . . .

Oh, my dear, I must tell you now—*the*
woman he loved and wronged was I;

Darling! I haven't long to live: I never
told you—forgive, forgive!”

For a long, long time Brown did not speak;
sat bleak-browed in the wretched
room;

Slowly a tear stole down his cheek, and he
kissed her hand in the dismal gloom

THE GHOSTS

To break his oath, to brand her shame; his
 well-loved friend, his worshipped
 wife;

To keep his vow, to save her name, yet at
 the cost of what? Her life!

A moment's space did he hesitate, a moment
 of pain and dread and doubt,

Then he broke the seals and, stern as fate,
 unfolded the sheets and spread them
 out . . .

On his knees by her side he limply sank,
 peering amazed—*each page was blank.*

(For oh, the supremest of our art are the
 stories we do not dare to tell,
Locked in the silence of the heart, for the
 awful records of Heav'n and Hell.)

Yet those two in the silence there seemed
 less weariful than before.

Hark! a step on the garret stair, a postman
 knocks at the flimsy door.

“Registered letter!” Brown thrills with
 fear; opens and reads, then bends
 above:

“Glorious tidings! Egypt, dear! The book
 is accepted—life and love!”

GOOD-BYE, LITTLE CABIN

GOOD-BYE, LITTLE CABIN

O DEAR little cabin, I've loved you so long,
And now I must bid you good-bye!
I've filled you with laughter, I've thrilled
 you with song,
And sometimes I've wished I could cry.
Your walls they have witnessed a weariful
 fight,
And rung to a won Waterloo:
But oh, in my triumph I'm dreary to-night—
 Good-bye, little cabin, to you!

Your roof is bewhiskered, your floor is
 aslant,
Your walls seem to sag and to swing;
I'm trying to find just your faults, but I
 can't—
You poor, tired, heart-broken old thing!

GOOD-BYE, LITTLE CABIN

I've seen when you've been the best friend
that I had,
Your light like a gem on the snow;
You're sort of a part of me—Gee! but I'm
sad;
I hate, little cabin, to go.

Below your cracked window red raspberries
climb;
A hornets' nest hangs from a beam;
Your rafters are scribbled with adage and
rhyme,
And dimmed with tobacco and dream.
"Each day has its laugh," and "Don't
worry, just work."
Such mottoes reproachfully shine.
Old calendars dangle—what memories lurk
About you, dear cabin of mine!

I hear the world-call and the clang of the
fight;
I hear the hoarse cry of my kind;
Yet well do I know, as I quit you to-night,
It's Youth that I'm leaving behind.
And often I'll think of you, empty and
black,
Moose antlers nailed over your door:
Oh, if I should perish my ghost will come
back
To dwell in you, cabin, once more!

GOOD-BYE, LITTLE CABIN

How cold, still and lonely, how weary you
seem!

A last wistful look and I'll go.

Oh, will you remember the lad with his
dream—

The lad that you comforted so?

The shadows enfold you, it's drawing to
night;

The evening star needles the sky:

And huh! but it's stinging and stabbing my
sight—

God bless you, old cabin, good-bye!

HEART O' THE NORTH

HEART O' THE NORTH

AND when I come to the dim trail-end,
I who have been Life's rover,
This is all I would ask, my friend,
Over and over and over:

A little space on a stony hill,
With never another near me,
Sky o' the North that's vast and still,
With a single star to cheer me;

Star that gleams on a moss-grey stone
Graven by those who love me—
There would I lie alone, alone,
With a single pine above me;

Pine that the north wind whinnies through—
Oh, I have been Life's lover,
But there I'd lie and listen to
Eternity passing over.

THE SCRIBE'S PRAYER

THE SCRIBE'S PRAYER

*When from my fumbling hand the tired
pen falls,
And in the twilight weary droops my
head;
While to my quiet heart a still voice calls,
Calls me to join my kindred of the Dead:
Grant that I may, O Lord, ere rest be mine,
Write to Thy praise one radiant, ringing
line.*

*For all of worth that in this clay abides,
The leaping rapture and the ardent flame,
The hope, the high resolve, the faith that
guides;
All, all is Thine, and liveth in Thy name:
Lord, have I dallied with the sacred fire!
Lord, have I trailed Thy glory in the mire!*

THE SCRIBE'S PRAYER

*E'en as a toper from the dram-shop reeling,
Sees in his garret's blackness, dazzling
fair,
All that he might have been, and, heart-sick,
kneeling,
Sobs in the passion of a vast despair:
So my ideal self haunts me alway—
When the accounting comes, how shall I
pay?*

*For in the dark I grope, nor understand;
And in my heart fight selfishness and sin:
Yet, Lord, I do not seek Thy helping hand;
Rather let me my own salvation win:
Let me through strife and penitential pain
Onward and upward to the heights attain.*

*Yea, let me live my life, its meaning seek;
Bear myself fitly in the ringing fight;
Strive to be strong that I may aid the weak;
Dare to be true—O God! the Light, the
Light!
Cometh the Dark so soon? I've mocked
Thy word,
Yet do I know Thy Love; have mercy, Lord.*

